Masquerading MARY

Emma Speed Sampson

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By

Emma Speed Sampson

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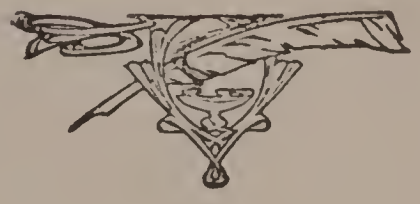
"Mammy's White Folks"; "The Shorn Lamb";
"The Comings of Cousin Ann"



Chicago
Reilly & Lee Co.

Printed in the United States of America

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SEP 22 '24

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CHAPTER I

The train, southward bound from New York, moved rapidly, sometimes gliding with incredible smoothness on shining rails, sometimes rocking and swaying on a new road bed, rattling over a bridge, shrieking through a non-stop town, puffing and panting into the station of a city. It moved so rapidly that it seemed to be getting ahead of the feeble February daylight and catching up with the darkness.

"A day coach ain't so bad in the day time — but believe me, it's something fierce when it gets dark outside. I feel like I'd been born and brought up on these old red velvet cushions and haven't ever had any other home. I can't remember when I wasn't bouncing along somewhere between New York and Baltimore with a baby crying in the next seat and a bald headed man eating peanuts and rattling a newspaper across the aisle. I know I've got a ticket to

Richmond, Virginia, and sometime along about one in the morning I'll get there — I know it, but I can't believe it. I feel like I'm going to spend the rest of my young life right on these old red cushions."

The speaker was a woman of ample figure and face, pleasing looking in spite of the inhuman aspect of her hair, which showed unmistakable signs of having gone through many and various ordeals both at the hands of the permanent waver and far from permanent dyer. Her hair was a streaked mahogany red, with purple shadows and peroxide high lights. Her remarks were addressed to a young woman whom the fortune of travel had made her seat mate.

"Oh, don't we arrive in Richmond before that time? I fancied it would be earlier. The Bradstreet — time tables, I mean — are confusing."

"Umhum! English! I been wondering what you are. I reckon you won't want to talk. My experience with the English is that they are mighty standoffish travelers no matter what class, first, second or third. Now me — I am a natural born mixer, especially when I am spending a night in a day coach. If you want me to dry up, say so. I'm not one to get huffy."

The seat mate laughed. The laugh had a certain arresting lilt, vaguely reminding the friendly one of the song of a bird with a broken wing, granted that a bird so maimed would or could sing.

"Please do not — er — er — dry up. I think it is exceedingly kind of you to talk to me. I might have pronounced the Americans standoffish had you gone all the way to Richmond without speaking to me. Why do you think I am English?"

"I don't think any more — I know. The word 'Bradstreet' set me to thinking, and the way you pronounced Americans 'Amehreecans' makes me know. I've traveled a lot in my time, in fact I keep myself broke traveling, and I like to size up the folks I meet on my journeys. Do you?"

"Why, yes — it is interesting."

"I reckon you are sizing me up just the same as I am you and maybe you are getting me better than I am you. This is the way I see you. Of course I may be wrong, but you look to me like an English girl who has recently landed and landed broke, or almost broke, or you wouldn't be on this cattle car. You ain't used to traveling this way. How do I know that? By your grips and your shoes and your

finger nails. Shoes and nails are great little indicators of character."

Again the lilting laugh!

"But your nails are well kept, too; your shoes quite smart, and I am sure my bags are not so handsome as yours. You are not English, are you?"

"Lord love you, no! I'm from the good old South — Virginia — not Richmond. I'm country born and bred; but along with getting fed up on corn pone and cabbage, I got fed up on the country and when I wasn't more than a kid I left home and started life as a cash girl. And I'm still in the same store. I'm a buyer now, but I don't save any more money than I did hollering 'ca-a-sh'. Every time I go off on a trip I come back home dead broke and usually in a day coach. Of course the management allows me expense money but I spend it all on shows. I'm just naturally crazy about a show."

"Cinemas?"

"You mean movies? Not on your life — speakies. I go to a movie when there is nothing else doing or I can't raise the necessary dough for the legit. Of course that happens right often and then I patronize the cheap second run houses. I got to keep going or I might as well be back on the farm, and if I

go there now there won't be any place for me to go when I get old. I ain't so young now, but I'm too young to be buried alive. My folks live in a great railroad center; twenty miles from three stations. 'Tain't as bad as it used to be since Henry Ford put us on the map, but it is still bad enough. Give me the city, I say, even if the city is no larger than Richmond. At least there are jitneys and electric lights and you can get a steam heated room with the privilege of the bath so that Saturday night doesn't mean any more in your young life than any other night."

"But why should it?—No, no, don't tell me! I am not going to be the kind of foreigner who is always asking questions. I am going to find out by listening. A steam heated room sounds very delightful. I am wondering if I might not procure a room in the same house—a small room with the privilege of a bath?"

The friendly one turned and looked searchingly at her seat mate. She was pretty, exceedingly pretty, with a royal bearing. Her hair was black and as fine as that of a blond baby. Her brows were arched, extending far on the temples. Her eyes were as blue as corn flowers, the lashes long and thick. Her nose

the kind of nose every girl would like to have, with thin, sensitive nostrils. Her mouth was sweet and sad, and a dimple in one corner gave her smile the fraction of a twist. She was slender almost to emaciation, and the impression she made on her companion was that she had been ill and was recently convalescent.

"Do you think it would be possible for me to get a room in your house?" she repeated, not at all nonplused by the searching scrutiny but returning the gaze with frank, open eyes.

"I ain't so sure. You see, Miss May, the lady that runs our house, is mighty particular — "

"Ah, so am I — at least — but perhaps I am not. I merely want a place to go."

"That's just it — Miss May ain't in business for her health or anybody else's health. She don't keep roomers for comp'ny, but she's mighty particular who she rents to and she wouldn't stand for me bringing home a girl I just picked up on the train. I tried it once and come mighty near losing my happy home. She was a pretty little thing, too. How was I to know she had more in her past than plenty of folks have in their future?"

"Of course! I beg your pardon," and the girl drew her slender form closer into the third

of the seat, which was all allowed by the ample figure of the lady of the streaked hair. She closed her eyes wearily. The distension of her sensitive nostrils, no doubt intended to express haughtiness, and the involuntary trembling of the lower lip, made a swift impression on the woman by her side.

"Aw now, kid, I ain't meaning to hurt your feelings or make you mad. I was just telling you about Miss May and how funny she is about her roomers. I ain't a bit particular myself. I take up with anybody —"

The girl by her side laughed, bit her lip to control herself, and then laughed again.

"You ought to have let me finish what I was saying. Miss May's ain't the only shelter in Richmond. There are all kinds of homes where you can light long enough to look about you. Get a job, if that's what you are after, and then Miss May'll be glad enough to rent you a room when I introduce you as a friend who already has a room but wants to change. Miss May is funny that way. She's kind of leery of anybody without a regular address."

"But I —"

"Of course you have had an address, but just now you haven't got one. Miss May is a great stickler for addresses, especially if a girl

is young and pretty. And you know, kid, you are pretty, at least you will be when you get a little more meat on your bones. Been sick?"

"You mean ill?"

"Sure! I remember now that sick means seasick to the English. Ill, then?"

"Yes, but I am quite strong and well now, and I do want a — position — job. Do you think I can get one in Richmond?"

"What kind? What can you do? Want to go in a shop?"

"I rather hoped I might get a situation as governess in a good family."

"Perhaps. I don't think Richmond folks have governesses much now-a-days, but some of the ultra smart ones might. Anyhow we can see. My job brings me in right close contact with all of the swell dames in Richmond, at least all the fat ones, and they have precious few reserves where Effie Sharp Burton is concerned. You see, I'm a corset buyer and fitter, and no matter how uppity a woman is when she is dressed, she is pretty apt to unbend to her corset fitter. I reckon they feel that there is no use in putting on airs before Miss Effie. They are too dependent on her for slenderizing their lines. You just leave it to me, child, to find out if there is an opening for a governess

in the city of Richmond. If there is, Effie Sharp Burton will find it."

"And a room, with the privilege of a bath?"

"That too! And now let's eat. Didn't you bring a lunch with you?"

"Why no, I thought —"

"Dining car? There may be one on this train, but if there is it is a long walk from this coach and little chance of our getting in because of the crowd from the Pullman cars. They'll rob you, too. No sirree! When they took off the dollar table de hoties, Effie Sharp Burton withdrew her patronage from dining cars. You don't catch me paying eighty cents for one scrambled egg that wasn't fit to cook any other way. I've got plenty for both of us. I always bring enough lunch for two because I have never seen the time when there wasn't a foolish virgin on this train who had neglected to fill her lamp."

She produced a box of generous size, filled with comfortable looking sandwiches, hard boiled eggs, doughnuts, cakes and pickles.

"I got an old chum that I stop with in New York and she always puts me up a jimdandy snack. Poor thing, she can't eat much herself because she's got a job in a swell shop trying on clothes — a cloak model — and she has to

keep her figure to a perfect thirty-six or lose her job. I wouldn't be her for a pretty. I been advising her to cut loose and eat all she craves and go get a place with the stylish stouts. As for me," she declared, helping herself to another thick sandwich, "it's up to me to eat all I want and keep myself up to my accustomed forty-six. You see, in this day and generation mighty few but fat women wear corsets, and they tell me they don't like any slender young person getting on to their curves. The truth of the matter is, the thin young ones ain't got a bit of sympathy for the fat old ones. Now me — I've been thin and I've got fat and I got kind feelings for all sizes."

"I believe you really and truly have," said her companion fervently. "I can't tell you how grateful I am to you for your kindness to me, one of the thin ones."

"Oh, sucks! That's nothing. Here, have another doughnut. I think you are good to listen to my running on so. Part of my business is running on. My customers expect it. I give you my word, if I ain't gassing in a steady stream they are sure to say Miss Effie's got a grouch or something. You wouldn't think it, but it's mighty important for a customer to laugh some while she's being fitted or she

might get fitted so's she couldn't laugh and I tell you that would be no laughing matter."

The girl by her side laughed and leaned back comfortably in the seat. There was a little color in her pale cheeks now, produced no doubt by the combination of nourishing food and the wholesome geniality of Effie Sharp Burton.

"Got all you want? Well, I might as well save the pieces. We might want another bite before we get to Richmond."

She busied herself replacing what was left of the food, after having pressed a sandwich on the bald headed man across the aisle and a doughnut on a tired mother whose crying baby had at last dropped asleep.

"One time I attended a course of lectures in psychology — but maybe you are fed up on so much talk. Just say the word if you want me to quit."

"Oh, please don't! I love to hear you talk."

"Well, I like to hear myself right smart — anyhow I been trying ever since to use what little I learned in selling corsets. It works pretty well. I reckon many a fat Richmond woman, when I get through with her, has forgotten she is fat just because I put her on the track of not thinking fat. Another thing, I have my fitting room lined with becoming mir-

rors — I mean the kind that slim you down a bit. I had a terrible time getting them and the boss and I mighty near came to the parting of the ways because I made myself so numerous on the subject. But I won out. Of course my fat customers don't know about my psychic looking glasses but they buy more corsets from me because of them. Maybe you think I oughtn't to fool the poor things that way, but I say it's not a sin to make folks feel happy. I'd make the glasses rosy if it'd do any good. I do have pink shades on the lights. Do you think that kind of deception is wrong?"

The seat mate did not answer. Her eyes were closed and as Miss Effie Sharp Burton turned to discover the reason the girl's sleepy head nodded involuntarily and sought the comfortable shoulder of her neighbor.

"Well, well! If I haven't talked the poor child to sleep," Miss Effie said to herself, slipping a plump arm around the tired girl, endeavoring to make her more comfortable. "Poor, pretty, little thing. She's mighty friendly for an English girl, snuggling up to me with her head on my shoulder. Most English don't forget themselves enough even in their sleep to be friendly with us plain Americans. And bless Bob! I don't even know her name."

CHAPTER II

"All out for Richmond!" sang a man at one end of the coach, and "All out for Richmond!" echoed a man at the other end.

Miss Effie Sharp Burton had dozed fitfully, her head resting against the dingy plush of the day coach. Her shoulder ached and her arm had gone to sleep, but she had bravely endured the discomfort so that the tired girl by her side might have unbroken slumber.

"Wake up, honey, here we are! This is Richmond."

"Richmond! Oh! You mean we are there, and I have slept all the way? How could I? And did I make a pillow of you without so much as by your leave? Please forgive me, Miss Burton. I don't see how I could have been so selfish. I wanted to hear all about the fat women, too, but I must have dropped off in the midst of it. I know your shoulder is numb."

"Never mind all that. My side will be all right and I'm glad you got some sleep. I'll

continue in our next about my fat customers. Now we must get a porter to help us out with our grips and call us a taxi. You don't know yet where you are going, I reckon? Hotels are mighty dear if you are hard up. Gee, I wish Miss May wasn't so particular and I'd take you right home with me. Well, no matter where you are going you've got to go. So let's beat it. Sorry you get your first look at Richmond from this down town station, but this one g. m. train seems to fancy arriving at this end of town. There's a masher — don't look at him. It's a good thing old Effie is along. However, I'm glad we saw that would-be lady's man, because now I know what I'll do. I been making donations for years to the Travelers' Aid and never yet had a chance to get even with 'em. There's the T. A. lady now. She sure is on her job. Look how she's squelching that masher!"

The girl, in a daze, followed the capable Miss Effie, who had procured a porter and directed him to go ahead and hold a taxi. Her interview with the kindly woman at the Travelers' Aid desk was thoroughly satisfactory. A working girls' home was called on the telephone and a bed guaranteed.

"What name?" was the only question asked.

"Mary — Mary Hill," answered the girl.

"*Miss* Mary Hill? You see this home doesn't take married women," said the kindly employee of the Travelers' Aid.

"Yes, *Miss* Mary Hill, English governess," put in Miss Effie, a determined gleam in her eye.

"Have you a trunk?"

"A box? Yes — a very large one I am afraid."

"That's all right. Give me your check and I'll see that it gets to you."

"I can't tell you how kind I think you are."

"Of course she is," bustled Miss Effie Sharp Burton. "Being kind is part of her job. Come on! Taxi has begun to chug and we'd better be moving."

"Now this is Main Street," she continued as the chauffeur settled his car comfortably in the trolley tracks and speeded up the deserted street, feeling perfectly safe from traffic cops at the early hour of one. "I reckon you've read the so-called great American novel: 'Main Street'? It's supposed to be typical of all American towns. Maybe so, but I can't see it. Anyhow it ain't true of Richmond. Plenty of stupid narrowness here, I'll admit, but lots of kindness and sweetness. I tell you I know, be-

cause I've been down and out here and folks have been good to me. I don't know anything about Mr. Sinclair Lewis as a home-body. He may be a kind gentleman and a good provider but I'd hate to be in his spectacles and see 'Main Streets' in all of my travels. Funny I hadn't even found out your name, Miss Hill. I meant to ask you before you went to sleep on me."

"I should have told you, but I have been in a daze since I landed. What would have happened to me if you had not been sitting by me on the train. You have been so kind. I wonder if you will be still kinder and call me Mary."

"Sure, if you will call me Effie."

The taxi jerked its wheels from the trolley track and turned down a broad, quiet street of comfortable looking houses.

"This is your street. The folks in Richmond sigh over this street and say it has seen better days. That is because it is kinder gone away to boarding houses, but I say that boarders are human beings and they might as well have a nice, broad street with magnolia trees on it as rich people who own their homes. The river is over yonder, the historic Jeemes; and there is a nice park at the end of the street with a

monument to John Smith, who is supposed to have landed there. But here we are! This is the place. I'm not going to get out because I must get a move on me and go to my downy or I won't be fit to fit corsets to-morrow. Here's my card. You come to see me as soon as you get rested up. I'm going to see that you get a job teaching the young idea how to shoot. S'pose you blow in the shop sometime to-morrow at lunch time — one o'clock. I'll be there. Up one flight and anybody will direct you to the corset department. Ask for Miss Effie and you'll get quick service. Good-bye, Mary!"

"Good-bye, Effie!" and the girl threw her arms as far around her new found friend as Miss Burton's dimensions permitted, and kissed her. She could not help a sob escaping her as she did so, but the sob was followed by a sad little laugh and: "Good-bye until to-morrow, my best and only friend in these United States."

Before Mary could ring, the door was opened by a woman in whose countenance sleep warred with hospitality. In a loud, hoarse whisper she bade her welcome and cautioned her to make no noise.

"Your bed's ready and all you gotta do is slip right into it. Two of the young ladies

in that dormitory will be getting up in about two hours to go on a early morning shift. I hope they won't disturb you. They are sure to, though, if you disturb them. Young ladies are mighty vindicertive, 'specially them working on irreg'lar shifts."

Mary expressed her regrets at having to rouse anyone at that hour of the night, but was assured that it was all in the day's work, and that a job was a job and if one was employed in a home for young working ladies and there happened to be arrivals at unearthly hours, then no matter how sleepy one might be it was up to one to get out of a nice warm bed and be hospitable.

"We are paid to be pleasant and pleasant we must be," she yawned. "No'm, I ain't the reg'lar matron. I am substitootin', but it pays to be pleasant anyhow because this institootion is run by a board of lady managers and there ain't ever any telling when a board of lady managers will fall out with itself and the matron will have to resign with the minority. That being the case I might get a reg'lar position. Anyhow, it pays to be pleasant and friendly-like." She yawned again prodigiously and shivered so that her many curl-papers trembled.

"A cold coming on from getting out of my

warm bed," she said, drawing her dingy grey blanket wrapper more closely around her. Mary could but reiterate how sorry she was.

The bed that awaited her proved to be in a room that had six other cots occupied by six sleeping girls.

"Better undress in the hall so's not to disturb the young ladies," the substitute matron suggested. "Bath rooms, three of them, at the end of the hall, down one turn. Good night!" and she waddled down stairs again, her bedroom slippers flapping on every step and her dingy dressing gown trailing after her.

Remembering the warning her hostess had given her of the vindictiveness of those on irregular shifts, Mary undressed in cautious silence in the dimly lit upper hall. An old square piano, that had been donated to the home by one of the members of the board, served as an impromptu dressing table. The upper hall, which was fortunately quite spacious, was lined with useless things given to the institution by its well wishers. There were two hatracks, a billiard table, a broken sofa and three washstands. Mary slipped into her bed without disturbing the six sleepers.

The bed was clean, although both mattress and pillow were a little lumpy. The room was

large, but hardly large enough to accommodate seven cots, three bureaus, two wardrobes and a sprinkling of odd chairs, to say nothing of an array of trunks and suit cases. A glow from a street light, sifting through the opened windows, illumined the apartment sufficiently for the newcomer to get a general idea of the furnishings as well as the individual tastes of her sleeping roommates in regard to hair, hygiene and complexions. Several of the girls had their heads almost under cover, with nothing showing but bristling curl papers or steel crimpers. And where a nose had come out for air it shone forth with cold cream high lights. Near the window was a curly head, bobbed and red, framing a childlike face. In the next cot a fat girl lay on her back with mouth wide open. The snore she snored was a mighty one.

"The kind of snore Jove might have snored when he nodded," thought Mary.

Another girl coughed fitfully in her sleep and yet another talked in her's with foolish incoherence.

Sleep, on Miss Effie Sharp Burton's shoulder, had been sweet and sound, and now Mary Hill, would-be governess in a good family, found her eyes propped open with no intention of sleeping and her brain more active than it had been

for many days. She really felt refreshed and not the least bit sleepy.

"I must think, I must think!" she said to herself, but she had been saying that ever since she left England and her tired brain had refused to think. Now, lying on this bumpy bed — where no doubt a few corn cobs had got mixed with the corn shucks — with her head on a pillow that felt as though it had been stuffed with the tail feathers of a turkey, and with six other noisily sleeping females lying by her; in a strange house, in a strange city, suddenly her brain began to function. Her past presented itself to her in a series of clear-cut pictures vignetted on the tablets of her memory. She saw her childhood in Ireland with the gay Irish mother and more sedate English father; girlhood in the select boarding school with the occasional highly prized holidays and treats; her mother's death. Then the war, changing boys and girls into men and women, sometimes into old men and old women. Her father's death while she was still at school. After the war, England staggering to normalcy. Society reasserting itself. Snobbishness again to the fore. Heroes without jobs. A London season with hectic rushing from one form of social function to another; dinners, balls, recep-

tions under the wing of a hateful old woman.

Something connected with the thought of this old woman made the girl laugh. All unconscious of her surroundings, she laughed aloud. It was the same clear, lilting laugh that had so impressed Miss Effie Sharp Burton. Strange it sounded here, ringing out above the noise of snoring and breathing.

"Aw cheese it, you gumps! This ain't no time for jokes," muttered one of the disgruntled sleepers. "I'll be having to get up in less than an hour and then you can laugh all you've a mind to, but for Pete's sake let a poor working girl get her hard earned rest."

"Oh, I beg pardon."

"Aw, shut up! This ain't no time for play acting either — 'Beg pawdon'," the complainant mocked.

Mary smothered another laugh, and strangely comforted by the human intercourse established with one of her room mates, she sank into a sweet and normal sleep, forgetting for the time everything connected with her past life. She was drowsily conscious of being in a home for self-supporting girls, sleeping in the room with six others, a fat girl snoring, a thin girl coughing and a grouchy one grumbling. She knew that in a short while some of those girls

must get up for an early morning shift. What an early morning shift was she was not sure, but she was glad she did not have to go on it, if it happened to be something on which one went, especially since it came at early morning.

CHAPTER III

She was awakened by a light flashing in her face and the sound of a window being closed. It was the early shifters who must remove their curl papers, wipe off the cleansing cream, go through a profunctory washing, rub in the vanishing cream, bring into play lip stick and eyebrow pencil, sparingly apply carmine and then powder with such lavish puffs that the air was filled with the strongly scented cosmetic and the thin girl with the cough almost strangled.

"Now look what you done, Tillie," gurgled the fat girl, sitting up in bed, thereby making the springs creak ominously. "You ain't called on to wake up everybody in the house, but that ain't what's eatin' me. It's sprinkling that powder around until poor little Min's got it in her lungs. The kid's got enough in her pipes without your stuffing them up with that old smelly pink powder."

"Aw, cheese it, Maggie Cross! Anybody that'll sleep on her back all night, tooting and

snorting like a truck in low, has got no room for calling anybody down. I'd a moved around quieter if somebody hadn't laughed out in the night — laughed out louder than your snore and Min's cough. If I was sure which one it was I'd cold pig her if it gets me late to my switch. I been telling all of you that Gertie and I will get up and out of here without a sound if you'll keep quiet and leave us get some sleep; but if you go gurgling and snorting and snuffling and coughing and laughing out in the night, then good-bye morning snooze for you."

The foregoing tirade was delivered in a loud, raucous whisper by Tillie, a handsome enough young person now that she had gone through the rites of removing curl papers, cold cream and flannelette nightgown. She now appeared with a wonderfully hennaed and crimped chignon, and her face was made up after the prevailing mode — round blotches of rouge high on her cheek bones, eyebrows plucked to a hair line and penciled sharply, a marshmallow nose and lips redder than a veritable blood-sucking vampire of phrase and fable. Her dress was a one piece black jersey, fitting the form almost as snugly as a stocking fits the leg, broken in its severity by a red leather belt and a string

of red beads wrapped twice around her neck and hanging below her waist. Gertie, the companion in the misery of early shifting, was a somewhat drab replica of Tillie, not so much rouge, hair more natural in color, powder more sparingly applied and one piece dress a bit more roomy. Gertie's beads, however, were quite up to the model in brilliancy and length, and her belt had the added feature of innumerable little knotted leather strings which hung all around the girl's slender hips as though in readiness for the scalps of possible victims.

By this time the occupant of every cot was awake, some of them grumbling, some of them merely amused by the dashing Tillie. The newcomer had remained quiet, not knowing what the etiquette was in a crowded dormitory of a boarding home for self-supporting girls. She had determined to confess to the laughter if anything more was said about a cold pig, whatever that might be. No one had noticed her presence and she devoutly hoped that the early shifters would depart before she was discovered. But fate had ordained otherwise.

The girl with the short red curls, whose cot was between Maggie Cross and the window, sat up in bed with a scowl on her pretty baby face.

"You girls give me a pain, hateful old grouches!" she screamed out like an angry child. "Dogs in the manger! Pills! I'm gonter report you to the Board. When Mrs. Rogers got me in this place she told me anything I didn't like just report to her. And they tell me she's the Board — at least the person on it with most 'fluence. I'm gonter tell her how you paint and powder and dye your hair and how you get up in the morning and wake up all the girls."

"Aw, shut up, angel face!" said Tillie scornfully. "The only reason you don't dye your hair is because it's already red. When the style changes you'll get busy. And you don't paint and powder because the country on you hasn't rubbed off yet. You sleep six in a room a little longer and you'll see what'll happen to your pink and whiteness. As for that old busy-body, Mrs. Rogers, just tell her for me she'd best be looking after her own daughter. She don't get up at five and wake folks up — she just stays up 'til five and goes through the streets with a bunch of society rough necks raising Hail Columbia. I reckon I know, because I've seen 'em riding up Franklin Street on their way home when I'm on my way to work. She lays on paint with a trowel and

powder with a shovel. But I reckon she has to do that to save her face — the poor innocent rich girl! You go with complaints before any board and I'll come along and hand 'em a few. Mrs. Rogers may be on a board but I've been on a switchboard at a hotel. There are two things a hello operator has gotter have and that's good ears and a good memory. I got both, and what I heard over the wire at the hotel I remember, and Miss Josephine Rogers was on one end of the wire. I had it in for the old dame ever since she came butting in down here and had what she called a heart to heart talk with us girls, telling us what a crime it was for us to buy ourselves silk stockings. I up and asked her who did she expect to buy 'em for us."

Mary, who had been intensely interested in the wrangle, laughed aloud. Had she thrown a bomb in that dormitory of sleepy girls, she could not have astonished them more. They had gone to bed with the seventh cot empty, and to find it occupied, as though by magic, filled them with consternation.

"Gee, if we ain't got comp'ny!" exclaimed one of the early shifters.

"Yes, and she's the merry little laugher that ruined my beauty sleep," said Tillie. "I swore

I'd cold pig her, but I reckon I can't without an introduction. What's your name, kid?"

"My word! Perhaps I'd better not tell you. It might serve in lieu of a formal introduction and the cold pigging would be mine. I am so sorry I laughed aloud in the night, but—"

"English, ain't you?"

"Ye—es."

"Oh, then I reckon I'll have to forgive the laugh in the night. It might have been a joke you heard last month that you just caught on to. Put us wise, kid. Tell us the merry jest."

But time was flying and Tillie must postpone the baiting of the new girl until a more seasonable hour than five in the morning. The light was turned off, the window opened again and once more the dormitory settled itself to sleep.

Mary lay quite still and silently took herself to task for laughing. She had always laughed aloud when amused. No doubt it was a foolish habit. The hateful old woman, under whose social wing she had once been forced to find shelter, had often chided her for that very laugh, calling it ill-bred, boisterous, unrefined. Others she remembered had loved her laugh, sought her out because of it. Hate her or love her, the laugh was as much a part of her as eyes or nose. If she laughed at all she must laugh

that way. She wondered that she could laugh at all. But then, why not? Were not things just as amusing as though her life had not gone to pot? What had her own private worries to do with the great and eternal risibleness of the universe? In fact, they made life just so much more ludicrous. She smothered another laugh in her pillow and pretended to sneeze. Nobody, not even the severe and critical Tillie, were she present, could blame her for sneezing.

By seven the whole house was astir. It reminded the newcomer of her life in the boarding school, although that institution was considered one of the most select in the British Isles. But girls are sisters under the skin, and those high born and carefully reared English maidens were wont to lose their stockings and borrow hairpins without the formality of asking, just as were these American working girls. The breakfast gong was the controlling force for one as for the other. The bathrooms and mirrors were the points where the battle raged most furiously. There was much pounding on the doors of the former and much pushing and crowding for a place in front of the latter. Mary thought wistfully of Miss Effie Sharp Burton's "privilege of the bath." She asked the good-natured and fat Maggie Cross if she thought it probable

that she might get in a bathroom before breakfast.

"Sure, just wait a minute. Those girls in there are only cat-washing themselves — I mean licking around with a rag. They are all once-a-weekers. They wear out more basins than they do tubs. Their big time is Saturday night. There! What did I tell you? Both of us can slip in here and you can take a dip while I use the basin with a lick and a promise. My advice to you is get it over with in five minutes or you'll get the name of being a bathroom hog. Don't mind me, kiddo. I'll keep my back turned. If you stay in too long somebody is liable to crawl in on you under the door. I say it was a shame to leave such a space under the doors. One time a swell who had seen better days came here to board and had the gall to demand a private bath. We gave her to understand that none of the baths were private below the knee. There's one thing that don't go here, and that is airs."

Mary was grateful that she did not have to take a bath in the presence of all six of her roommates. The kindly Maggie kept her back religiously turned, and in the prescribed five minutes the two were prepared to open the door to the clamoring line outside. Having

bathed in company, dressing in company was not so bad as it might have been, although some of the girls were not so thouhtful as Maggie Cross and gazed critically at her lingerie.

"My grandmother is English," said one, "but she says all English people wear shimmies. You don't."

Mary laughed. "Perhaps not all."

"Maybe your grandmother ain't so hightoned as some," suggested another, deliberately helping herself to one of Mary's hairpins.

"Hightoned," protested the first speaker, "why my grandmother is a high up English lady. Anybody could tell that by the way she handles her aitches. I've heard that was an unfailing sign, and Granny drops hers one place and sticks 'em on another as pretty as any duchess."

At this bit of family history, Mary smothered her bubbling laugh.

CHAPTER IV

The dining room accommodated fifty persons. Three long narrow tables were ranged in a row, with chairs so closely placed as to furnish scant elbow room to the guests, and no room between the tables for a servant. What service there was must be given from the outer sides and ends. Mary kept close to her bathroom friend, Maggie Cross. Remembering her dear Effie Sharp Burton, she decided her patron saint was without doubt a fat one, for in less than twelve hours the two persons who had befriended her were, to say the least, plump.

Food, the like of which she had never seen or smelled, was being borne in on great trays by a grinning, slovenly, colored maid. Behind her came a colored boy whom the board of lady managers dignified in their reports by the title of butler. His duty at breakfast was to pour steaming black coffee into awaiting cups of heavy stone china.

"I thought I smelt buckwheat cakes and sossage," exclaimed Maggie Cross, gleefully, as

a plate with a stack of three large brown cakes topped with two sausages was placed in front of her. "There's nothing like 'em for smelling, unless'n it's eating. Pass the maple syrup, you down there. Start the butter, too."

Mary watched her companion spread butter on and between the stacked cakes and then pour a generous stream of syrup over sausages and buckwheats. She watched and then fearfully did likewise. The result was better than she had expected. She was frankly hungry; hungrier, it seemed, than she had ever been. The chairs were rapidly filled by girls of all ages from seventeen to seventy, at least a few of them looked quite that old. However, most of them were young and some of them astonishingly pretty. The English girl marveled at the smartness of their attire. She was sure that in England the young women, who lived in boarding homes, were not so stylish as these girls.

The substitute matron, Mrs. Flim, came bustling into the dining room. She looked very much as she had in the middle of the night, except that the curl papers were hidden by a boudoir cap and the dingy grey wrapper had given place to a black and white checked bungalow apron, though why boudoirs and bungalows should have to answer for those garments

is a mystery. Certainly Mrs. Flim had never owned a boudoir, nor did she hold for bungalows as she was sure they were damp and had once read of one in some East Indian story that had a snake in the bathroom. Nevertheless, boudoir caps and bungalow aprons were that lady's usual apparel. The reason she looked very much as she had in the night was that she still had the expression of one who was paid to smile. This gesture was a more or less painful one, in that she was singularly lacking in features. Eyes, nose, mouth, chin and smile might have been painted on a stuffed stocking heel and would have resembled Mrs. Flim quite as much as a rag doll.

"Excuse my being late, young ladies, but I was up so long in the night. It is my duty and I am not complaining — although it is very inconvenient to have caught a fresh cold in my head."

For one with no nose to speak of, no doubt it was very inconvenient to have a cold — fresh or otherwise.

"Ah, Miss Hill," she exclaimed as she saw Mary. "So you are down. I hope you rested well. Young ladies, this is Miss Hill, Mary Hill. I am sure you will be kind to her and help her all you can. She came in the middle

of the night. I was called up on the phone by the Travelers' Aid lady at the station. Of course it is an awkward time for a stranger to arrive in Richmond, but it is not my business to ask questions — only to be kind. Any questions must be asked by the Board. By the way, young ladies, I hope you have not forgotten that the Board meets this morning and it is most important to have your beds nicely made and all of your things in order. Some of them always want to inspect the rooms. While I am only substitootin' as matron, I can't help taking a pride in having the Home make a good impression on the Board. Mrs. Rogers is most particular — though kind — very kind."

Mary could not help wondering whether or not Mrs. Rogers was paid for being kind. The mention of her name reacted on the breakfasters very much as it had on the early shifters. There were muttered "Old Butinsky!" "Queen Snooper!" and so on.

"I spread my bed up and it's gotta stay thataway," said one. "If Mrs. Angelica Belle Rogers don't like it she can lump it."

"Mine's already lumpy enough," grumbled another.

"My things are picked up to suit me."

"Better hide your silk stockings. Angelica

B. is great on leg inspection. I wouldn't be surprised if she didn't make the Board put a by-law in their constitution prohibiting us girls from wearing silk stockings," said a middle aged woman whose thin, eager face and great, hungry, deep-set eyes had attracted Mary's attention from the first.

"She'd better keep her eye on Miss Josephine Roger's legs and let ours alone. They do say Miss Josephine's don't keep to the straight and narrow to hurt."

"Meouw! Meouw!" caterwauled a small saucy person at the far end of the table. Mary recognized the curly red-haired one who had threatened to report the dashing Tillie to the Board of Lady Managers. "I think Mrs. Rogers is mighty sweet and Miss Josephine is swell and stylish. That's the reason you pick on her."

"Listen to teacher's pet!" cried a beautiful black-eyed girl. "Who said Mrs. Rogers wasn't sweet? And who said Josephine wasn't stylish? Both of them are sweet and both of them are stylish, for that matter; but Mrs. Rogers has got it in her bean that working girls need more watching than playing girls and it's all wrong. Working girls are too busy sleeping and eating and making a living to have much time for devilment."

During the foregoing conversation the maid and butler were engaged in serving an endless stream of buckwheat cakes and coffee. The girls, with few exceptions, attacked the food with appetite and expedition. The breakfast menu evidently met with general approval.

"Gee, I sure do like buckwheat cake morning," sighed Maggie Cross, having wheedled a second stack from Lucy, the maid. "I reckon it's a good thing for me we don't have them every day, for with the butter and lasses I'd get fat and get a complexion like a nut caramel besides. Why is a buckwheat cake like a caterpillar? It's a old one that I read in a joke book, but it's good all the same. 'Cause it's the grub that makes the butter fly."

There were groans and giggles from the neighboring breakfasters. "You can bet on Mag. She hands us a chestnut at every meal — but she's a good old scout for all that," whispered the girl on Mary's other side. She was a pleasant looking person with keen grey eyes and a big laughing mouth.

"Don't take what the girls say about Mrs. Rogers as gospel truth. They talk that way partly to tease Mrs. Flim and partly to see how much that little red-headed girl at the other end of the table will report on them. She

makes it her business to tell everything she hears. They would not think of criticizing the chairman of the Board before the regular matron, Mrs. Prince. Mrs. Prince would jack them up good and proper; but Mrs. Flim is soft and too anxious to please all parties. She's a good natured old thing, though. She wouldn't mind if Mrs. Prince's bronchitis took a turn for the worse, however. She'd say it was the Lord's will and fix her face so it could half smile and half cry and go before the Board and ask for the job. Good-bye! I hope you are going to like Richmond and the home. It's a good old burg and this place ain't half bad considering the money we pay. Fact is, it's a darn sight better than a greasy third class boarding house. I've lived in both, and I know."

Breakfast over, there was a general exit. The house was quickly emptied, a few boarders who were on night shifts remaining to sleep. Mary found one of these in her bed when she went to the dormitory with the intention of making up her cot so that it might bear the inspection of the Board.

"'Scuse me, but somebody was in mine and this one looked kinder soft and clean," apologized the tired occupant, who dropped to sleep before Mary could assure her it was all right,

although she made a mental note that Mrs. Flim must see to it that at least she would not have to share sheets with another.

Mrs. Flim was busily engaged in putting the house in order for the expected visitation of the Board. The butler and Lucy were lost in clouds of dust of their own raising, from which they occasionally emerged to indulge in joyous repartee, resting on their brooms the while.

In the course of time the dust settled and was wiped from furniture and floors with oily mops and rags which gave a spurious shine to everything. Chairs and sofas were pushed and pulled into place, shades lowered just enough to hide any corners that might have been skipped. Then Mrs. Flim disappeared to remove her curl papers and change from bungalow apron to the proper clothing for a substitute matron to wear when the Board was in session.

CHAPTER V

During the frenzy of cleaning, Mary took refuge in a reading room which opened from the living room. It was a quiet place, lined with book shelves filled with a heterogeneous collection of books placed at random, with no order as to size or subject; some of them with the backs in, some out, and some piled in the manner of old bricks fresh from the hands of house wreckers. The books in the library had no doubt come from the same or similar source as the billiard table and the old square piano. Most of them were gifts from private homes. There were a few new books, at least books showing new backs, but the subject matter dated principally from "The Wide, Wide World" and the Elsie books period. All the new volumes had been chosen with great care by a committee from the Board, with a view, seemingly, of furnishing mental pabulum for morons.

There were two high, narrow windows draped with twisted lace curtains that matched each other well in crookedness and dinginess but

not at all in design. Through the windows one could see a side yard with a vista of ash cans and garbage pails in the rear. A dreary prospect, except for the fact that a brave old magnolia tree spread its branches from a neighboring yard, its glossy dark green foliage relieving the general drabness of the outlook.

In the shelter of the leaning high board fence, an occasional daffodil had poked a green nose through the hard soil, blackened from a century of soft coal soot. By craning one's neck it was possible to catch a glimpse of a bed of winter pansies planted quite close to the house. And joy of joys, one was in bloom! The English girl clasped her hands over her breast in an ecstacy of delight. She was transported in mind and spirit to a library in an old English country home. Its walls also were lined with shelves, and the shelves filled with books both old and new. But every book, from the heaviest calf bound tome to the daintiest limp leather volume of modern verse, had its *raison d'etre* and its proper place.

Mary was no longer in the untidy reading room in Richmond, Virginia, with its shabby curtains and nondescript furnishings; but was again in the library at Dorset. She could smell the pleasant, faint odor of Spanish leather, feel

the deep pile of a blue Chinese rug. She could see with her mind's eye the orderly rows of books, remembering accurately how they were ranged along the shelves. On that lower shelf were bound volumes of *The Tattler* and *The Spectator,* Macauley, Hallam, Carlyle. Higher up, the English poets; some of them in rare editions. There were the French novels, camouflaged in sober bindings. Yes, she could remember them all.

No longer did she look through a dingy lace curtain and unwashed pane to a bleak unkempt back yard, but French windows opened on an English garden, with trim walks and hedges. The flower beds were a riot of color, but there was an order in the riot. It was February in America but in her mind it was late August in England. Everything that can bloom in August was blooming in that garden. The girl drew in deep breaths of the pungent odor of marigolds and zinnias. The hot smell of petunias combined with tube roses to drown the fainter perfume of the monthly roses, but it was the roses that came to her in the end, perhaps because there was always a bowl of them on the library table at Dorset.

She sank into a chair by the window. She was remembering — God, how she was remem-

bering! Crossing the Atlantic, arriving in New York, the journey to Richmond, the night in a dormitory — all was a dream. The reality was this sweet old English country place. Those terrible complications had never arisen in her life. It was all a mistake. She would awake in a moment. Around the corner of the box hedge would come her Golden Knight, on his boyish face the look of Sir Galahad — only she was his quest and not the Holy Grail. She closed her eyes. She knew that in a moment he would be there. The hateful old woman and the insinuating Captain had never told her those terrible things about him, her Golden Knight. They couldn't have. This was a horrid nightmare. She would awaken soon and he and she could laugh about it together. Perhaps it would be kinder not to tell him she had dreamed such things about him. It was wrong to doubt him even in her sleep.

"Ladies! The meeting will come to order!" Reality was thrust upon poor Mary in the foregoing command, expressed in a clear, cutting voice. In the back of her mind she had been dimly conscious of much ringing of a bell and a steady hum of voices, but so strong had memory held her in its grip that she had dreamed on until that loud, determined

"Ladies!" asserted itself from the adjoining room.

The hum of voices ceased and Mary dropped back on the western hemisphere with a thud.

"We can wait no longer for Miss Elizabeth Somer," the voice continued. "It is past the time for our board meeting."

"It is not quite ten o'clock," objected a fresh, youthful voice.

"My watch says five after, and I am never wrong. The meeting will come to order. I will lead in prayer."

Mary bowed her head in automatic reverence, although it was with difficulty that she restrained that bubbling laugh that was ever getting her into trouble. The prayer was eloquent and oratorical. In it Mrs. Angelica Belle Rogers condescendingly informed the Almighty of the aims and aspirations of the Board of Lady Managers of the Home for Working Girls. True, she concealed her condescension under the cloak of oft repeated "Thou knowest," but her tone implied that His knowledge was gained only through her efficient publicity. Blessings were called down on the home and its inmates, spoken of sometimes as "Thy cheeldren," sometimes as "our fair young seesters, for our seesters they are, O God, al-

though our walks of life may be far apart." Especial blessings and appreciation was asked, even demanded, for the lady managers whose untiring efforts, charity and unselfishness made possible the carrying on of "this, Thy work." The matrons, regular and substitute, were remembered; lauded for their good work and chided and forgiven in one breath for any mistakes they might have made in conducting the affairs of housekeeping. "They are but mortal," she said tolerantly, "as are we all," though this she added as an afterthought.

"And finally and lastly, O God, bless this Thy cheild, the unworthy Chairman of the Board. Have mercy on her frailities, which no doubt are many." Here there was a pause which seemed to the listening Mary to be left in case anyone wished to take issue with her as to the existence of said frailities. There was only a slight cough from some member of the board and a rustling as of shifting positions, then the speaker continued:

"But remember, Father, that the heat and burden of the day has been borne by one little woman — remember her zeal in this, Thy work. Remember her courage in starting this project, her untiring devotion in carrying on the undertaking in the face of opposition and rebellion,

her triumphant success in spite of division and secession. There have been times when the task has seemed too great, times when she has been tempted to loose her hand from the plough, times when her hand alone could guide this ship of young and unprotected maidens between the Scylla of debt and the Charybdis of a tag day. But all that has passed. No longer do we have to report a deficit." Here there was a decided rustling and a cough suggesting a protest. Mary thought perhaps it was the treasurer, who may have felt that her province was being encroached upon.

"Truly," the voice went on, "it might be said of Thy servant: 'She hath done what she couldn't!'"

Before the listener could clap her hand over her mouth a low delicious laugh escaped. It was heard but faintly because of the rustling of draperies and shuffling of feet as the president pronounced a solemn "Amen," and the members allowed themselves to relax into a meeting of the board. The entrance of Miss Elizabeth Somer also served to detract the attention of the ladies from the unmistakable sound of amusement that had broken on their ears. Somebody had certainly laughed. There was much whispering and questioning as to who

the guilty party was, but the meeting was again called to order by the able Mrs. Rogers. The minutes of the preceding meeting were read by the recording secretary, who turned out to be no less a person than Miss Somer. Mary gathered that Miss Somer must be somebody, since there had been a question of awaiting her arrival before proceeding with the business of the board. Miss Somer's voice was deep and commanding. She read the minutes almost as though she were intoning a service. The fact that a motion had been made and seconded, discussed, amended and finally tabled, was endowed with a mysterious and almost religious significance by the sonorous reading of the recording secretary.

"You have heard the minutes of the preceding meeting. Are there any corrections?" There was an ominous pause. Could it be that there breathed a woman brave enough to correct Miss Elizabeth Somer? "If not, they stand approved."

Next the treasurer's report — a jumbled account of frenzied finance in which the person on whom the office of treasurer had been forced seemed hopelessly involved. But she came forth with flying colors, in the end declaring:

"Anyhow, the home's got five hundred and

thirty dollars and thirty-three cents in the bank, and all the bills are paid till next time. I fancy that's more than can be said of any of us."

There was a general laugh as she finished her report and the presiding officer rapped sharply for order. It was evident that Angelica Belle Rogers brooked no levity at a board meeting. Mary liked the voice of the treasurer, and felt sure she was young and attractive.

Next there was a vapid discussion about the tuning of a piano. Word had come to Mrs. Rogers from some mysterious source, which she did not feel at liberty to divulge, that there was much complaint among the girls in regard to the piano.

"If they don't like it, lock it up and let them do without a piano," broke in Miss Somer. "It is a perfectly good piano, plenty good enough. I, for one, am opposed to coddling these girls too much. Are they accustomed to pianos in the homes from which they come?"

"Why, yes, some of them are, I am sure," spoke the gentle voice, "otherwise how did they learn to play? We have several girls who really play very well. One of them plays charming dance music."

"Exactly!" boomed Miss Somer. "Dance

music! If you would listen to me you would have no dancing in this boarding home. While I do not disapprove of dancing generally, I highly disapprove of permitting these young persons to indulge in a pastime so frivolous when they should be turning their thoughts to higher things."

"Oh, come, Lizzie, let the poor girls kick up now and then." It was the voice of the treasurer. "Besides, the piano has to be tuned because it is necessary for the accompaniments when we have the song service on Sunday afternoon." After all, perhaps the treasurer was not young since she seemed to be addressing Miss Elizabeth Somer as Lizzie.

"That's just like you, Puss Johnston. You always take the soft side. You have the reputation of spoiling husbands, children, cooks and dogs. Now you want to spoil these working girls. For my part I do not think one needs a piano in such perfect tune for the singing of hymns."

Mary caught her laugh this time before it escaped her.

Mrs. Rogers again rapped for order and coldly commanded that speakers address the chair.

Puss Johnston, who was no doubt Mrs.

Johnston, since it appeared that she spoiled husbands, now moved that the piano be tuned. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously except for Miss Somer's booming "No!"

"I know of a piano tuner who will come in the evening after his working hours and do the job cheap for us," suggested one.

"If you will permit the chair to speak," said Mrs. Rogers, "that will never do." Whenever Mrs. Rogers said "if you will permit the chair to speak" it meant that she was out of the chair for good and on the floor.

"It will never do to have a man working around the place when the girls are at home. Our duty is to protect these little girls and put no temptation in their way."

"Nonsense, Angy!" again the voice of Miss Somer. "It is a well-known fact that piano tuners are always tottering old men. He would be perfectly safe in this house full of young persons at any hour of the day or night."

"I was not thinking of the safety of the old man," answered the chair.

"But all piano tuners are not old," said one. "I have just finished reading Rita Coventry and in that novel there is a piano tuner who is quite young and so fascinating he gets ahead of all the men and carries off the vamp."

"Ladies! Ladies!" rapped Mrs. Rogers. "Come to order! We are here to discuss facts, not fiction. It has been moved and seconded, and the motion carried, that we have the piano tuned. Tuning a piano necessitates a piano tuner whether old or young, and what hour he will come rests with your Chairman — who is quite willing to attend to all such details for the good of this enterprise. The matter is closed. We shall now proceed with business. I regret to report that Mrs. Prince is still absent from her post of duty. Of course she is ill, but she can hardly expect to remain indefinitely in the employ of the home while she takes her ease."

"Madame President!"

"Puss — Mrs. Johnston?"

This time Puss Johnston's voice was not so soft. It had a determined note at which husbands and children, servants and dogs, would no doubt have been startled.

"I have been to see Mrs. Prince and found her still suffering intensely with bronchitis. She is better, but not yet able to be up and about. In view of the faithful and efficient service Mrs. Prince has rendered the home, I move that her leave of absence be extended until she is perfectly well. And since our treasury is in such

a healthy state I move that Mrs. Prince's salary be paid her as usual."

There were many simultaneous seconds.

"Any discussion?" The tone was that which a person might use when in the act of biting tenpenny nails.

"Of course there is discussion," boomed Miss Somer. "Why should we encourage laziness in a hireling,"

"Oh, Lizzie! Not laziness! And how can you call Mrs. Prince a hireling?"

"Address the chair!" rapped the President. "Ladies this is an important matter. We must remember that we are guardians of funds entrusted to us by the public. We must not lightly pass a motion to use those funds in any way but for the betterment of this home —"

"Exactly!" broke in Mrs. Johnston.

"A full discussion is desired, nay, insisted upon, by your President."

There was silence. Miss Elizabeth Somer was in a quandary. She was a chronic opposer to every motion, but on the other hand she liked nothing better than upsetting the plans and policy of Angelica Belle Rogers. It was plain to see that Mrs. Rogers was desirous of ousting the present matron. Angy Rogers had her way to often. She must be disciplined.

"I withdraw my objection. Question — put the question!"

The question was put by the enraged president, each word a tenpenny nail chewed up and spat out. The motion was passed by a full throated chorus of "Ayes." Then Mrs. Rogers became meek and lowly. This was a sign of danger. Mrs. Rogers with a mouth full of mush was a more deadly opponent than when she was merely biting nails.

CHAPTER VI

It was at this juncture, at the moment when the chairman of the board was changing from nails to mush, from hard to soft, that Mrs. Flim was summoned to report as matron. Mary could picture the "paid-to-smile expression" she was no doubt wearing. She only hoped that she was no longer clothed in bungalow apron and boudoir cap, but had donned more suitable attire in which to appear before the august body of the Board of Lady Managers.

"Yes ma'am, everything is going fine, ma'am," she minced in reply to Mrs. Rogers' gentle request for a full report of the doings and happenings of the boarding home. "No ma'm, I don't have any trouble with the young ladies. They treat me fine. Only this morning they said to me: 'Oh, Mrs. Flim, we can't bear to think of your leaving us. You are just like a mother to us.' And the young lady that came in the night — she was that sorry for disturbing me, but I told her that I was here to be disturbed, and if I could be the

means to help a tottering sister, why then it would be a jewel in my crown. Of course I don't hold for lone, lorn females arriving in strange cities at two o'clock in the morning. It looks like something was behind it. Of course I ain't saying there is, but appearances are often deceiving. She looks a lady and talks a lady, but ladies don't turn up in Richmond at that time of night, waking up everybody and not knowing a soul and wanting a job. Of course she ain't a lady, in spite of her having a trunk as big as a caboose and a hat box. Yes ma'm, she's English. I reckon she's a lady's maid and that's where she got her fine airs."

"A servant! This is a serious matter, Mrs. Flim, one we must approach with care and diplomacy," said Mrs. Rogers, her tone losing some of its softness and getting back a touch of its sharpness. "The young women of this establishment would not brook the inclusion of a menial in this, their happy home. You had better summon this English person. Of course say nothing to her of this."

Mary felt the truth of the old saw concerning eavesdroppers. Indeed, the fact that she was eavesdropping had not occurred to her until that moment. If the board wished its proceedings to be confidential why should a meet-

ing be held in a parlor that might be classed as public, and with nothing but a flimsy portierre dividing it from the reading room, which was certainly open to the inmates of the home at all hours? At any rate it was an awkward situation in which to find one's self. It was no laughing matter, but it was with difficulty that she refrained from making it such. A lady's maid! Somehow the joke seemed to be on a certain disagreeable old woman in England and not on her.

She heard Mrs. Flim calling her:

"Miss Hill! Miss Hill! Where are you, dearie?"

She slipped through a door leading into the back hall, up the dark back stairs and reached the upper hall in time to lean an innocent head over the bannister.

"You are wanted in the parlor, miss."

It was very like being called before the faculty of the select boarding school. Mary smoothed her countenance as she had often enough as a school girl when preparing to win over the irate head of the school. On the whole, since she was in for it, the girl was rather glad of the chance to see the Board of Lady Managers whose voices she had been hearing for the last half hour. She had pictured each one

and was curious to see if her surmises were at all correct. As she descended the stairs she noted that Mrs. Flim had discarded the bungalow apron for a skin tight gown of shiny black satin. Her soft and ample figure was laced into creaking stays, over the top of which the extra fat spilled like dough that had been put to rise in too small a vessel. The curl papers that the boudoir cap had concealed during breakfast had done their work. The result was a coiffure of puffs and curls, tier on tier, of a blue blackness only equalled by the satin gown.

Mary timidly entered the room in the wake of Mrs. Flim. After all it was not in the least like facing the faculty. Much worse! About ten women were seated in a circle. To the agitated girl they seemed to be many more, but to steady her nerves she counted them and including the chairman, secretary and treasurer, there were exactly ten. In order to count them she must look at them, and finding the majority with pleasant, kindly faces, Mary lost some of her timidity. The mental pictures she had made of the voices were all wrong. Mrs. Angelica Belle Rogers she had expected to be a small person. If she was not small, why had she so repeatedly informed the Almighty of

her petiteness? Had she not spoken of herself as a little woman who bore the heat and burden of the day? Perhaps she was small by the side of the heat and burden, but by the side of the secretary and treasurer she loomed large and impressive. She was handsomely dressed, rather too handsomely for a morning board meeting, but Mrs. Angelica Belle Rogers made it a rule to start out in the morning clothed for the day, and her engagement book showed two more board meetings, a luncheon at the Commonwealth Club in honor of a Hindu lecturer, an afternoon bridge party and later on a silver tea given for the relief of either the Far East or the Near East, she couldn't remember which. What ravages time had made on the countenance of Angelica Belle had been skillfully obliterated by beauty doctors. According to her code, wrinkles and gray hair were signs of weakness and inefficiency.

The secretary was not at all the type of person Mary had expected to see. From the deep, commanding voice, Mary had imagined Miss Elizabeth Somer would be tall and perhaps a bit masculine in appearance, tailor made in attire. She proved to be small, with sharp, rather aristocratic features, thin lipped and haughty. She was dressed in mourning of

the deepest dye, with a bonnet and long crepe veil thrown back from her face. Mary felt instinctively that her attitude towards her was unfriendly.

The girlish voiced treasurer, Mrs. Johnston, was frankly an old lady with hair silvered and face pleasantly wrinkled. Her eyes were very blue and young. When Mary looked into them she felt she had received an embrace as much as though she had been taken into the lady's arms and been softly and sweetly kissed. There had been a young teacher at boarding school who had smiled at her that way when she was brought before the faculty. That smile had always made life less complicated. She felt somehow that Mrs. Puss Johnston's smile would help out now.

"This is her!" announced Mrs. Flim.

Mary bowed her head. If only she could hold in that laugh!

"Your name?" The president's voice was stern. She had not been allowed to have her way in regard to Mrs. Prince, but here was a young person whom she intended to control. When Mrs. Rogers was downed in one place she always rose up in another, stronger and more determined. She eyed the English girl critically.

"Her name is Miss Hill," spoke up Mrs. Flim. "Miss Hill meet Mrs. Rogers."

"Let the young person speak for herself."

"How do you do, Mrs. Rogers? My name is Mary Hill."

"And your occupation?"

"I have no occupation at present, but am desirous of obtaining a place as governess."

"Governess!"

"Yes, nursery governess! I mean I prefer teaching young children."

"Why did you come to Richmond?"

"But why not? Richmond is a charming city, so I am informed."

"By whom?"

"By everybody who speaks of it."

"Humph!' It was an ejaculation in the nature of a snort. Mrs. Rogers was becoming irritated. The young English person was entirely too independent. It was a well-known fact that English servants were the most respectful and servile on earth, and this girl was actually standing up to her, Angelica Belle Rogers, as though she were her equal, or even superior. If a lady's maid, she was certainly not a desirable one. She longed to put her in her place and inform her that the boarding home was not open to the servant class; but

there was a certain easy dignity about the girl that cowed Mrs. Rogers, if such a word could be used in connection with that managing person.

"I still do not see why you should have come to Richmond. You have no friends here." This was made as a statement and not an interrogation.

"Excuse me! I have some very good friends here. The oldest and best is Miss Effie Sharp Burton. We came down from New York on the same train." The realization had come to Mary that she must bluff her way through this interview. At the mention of Miss Effie Sharp Burton there was a general movement on the part of the stout women on the board to pull down their stays and smooth their wrinkled fronts. It was as involuntary as is the tendency for the tongue to make a furtive sweep of the teeth when tooth paste is the subject of conversation. Mrs. Angelica Belle Rogers patted her well corsetted diaphragm as she emitted a self-satisfied "Ah!"

"Do you know her well?"

"Well enough to call her Effie and have her call me Mary. She regretted exceedingly not taking me to the place where she lodges, but Miss May could not accomodate me."

There was much whispered conversation among the board members concerning Miss Effie and the wide acquaintance she had made on her extensive travels.

"She's the best there is in town," panted a very stout person. "I couldn't get along without her. She persuaded me to try a front lace. It's a great comfort since my arms seem to have got so short I can't reach in the back to lace up. I thought at first — "

"An elastic brassiere takes care of some superfluous flesh I have under my scapulas. Miss Effie — "

"I wouldn't let anyone else fit me for anything in the world."

"Nor would I! These thin corset fitters have no sympathy or understanding in regard to fat women. Miss Effie knows how it is and she tries to make people comfortable, too. After having her fit me I always go away feeling kind of happy and — and — slender. I really believe a new corset does me more good than a course in psychology — and it lasts longer. One's soul takes a slump in the course of time, no matter how convincing these psychology lecturers are. But a well-made, expensive corset, recommended by Miss Effie, holds up a long time." The speaker was a jolly

woman whom the time honored phrase: "fair, fat and forty" fitted to a nicety.

Miss Effie's name had proven to be an open sesame to the hearts of the stout members of the board. Miss Elizabeth Somer, however, did not belong to that class, and even though she had, her spirit of opposition would have compelled her to disapprove of anyone well spoken of by the majority. She had been quite prepared to fight a battle with Angelica Belle, taking either side left vacant in regard to this English person, Mary Hill. Miss Somer was a gallant fighter and always gave the opponent the privilege of choosing his side first. All she asked was the *other* side. She always got it. If by any chance her opponent was won over to her way of thinking, she quickly changed that way of thinking and lo! was on the other side of the argument, fighting as furiously as before and giving no quarter.

Miss Somer sniffed expectantly. She was ready for battle, but was in some doubt as to which was the *other* side. In fact, there did not seem to be anything to fight about. While she was turning the matter over in her mind, and before she had come to any conclusion, Mrs. Johnston made a motion to adjourn, first stating that Miss Hill's case was one for the com-

mittee on employment to take up. Mrs. Johnston being chairman of that committee, there was a general raising of eyebrows and a faint giggle from one member, who whispered to her neighbor:

"Put one over on Angelica B."

The women filed out, several of them stopping to speak kindly to Mary. Mrs. Rogers, however, stalked by, her well groomed head in the air. If the committee on employment would grapple with this matter unaided by their able president, let them do it. There was much other work for her to attend to in connection with the boarding home. She had every intention of making herself disagreeable on an inspection tour from kitchen to dormitories. And so she started on her triumphal progress, with poor Mrs. Flim following, her shoes and tight satin dress creaking apologetically and her smile painfully holding its own on her featureless face.

Mary stood aside until the room was emptied of all except the gentle treasurer, who was evidently killing time by pretending to busy herself with the accounts. Her blue eyes had signalled an invitation to the girl to wait. As the last member of the board trailed out, she beckoned Mary to her side.

"You made a gallant stand, my dear. I

could see it was hard on you. Miss Effie telephoned me early this morning about you."

"Oh, then you knew—" and here Mary hesitated.

"Yes, my dear, I knew that some problem had arisen in your life that made it advisable for you to leave England. I knew it was your own problem and that you should not be compelled to share it with ten other women."

"But you knew that I was not telling the truth when I said Miss Burton was an old friend and that I had other friends in Richmond. Somehow it did not seem like lying at the time. Miss Effie *is* like an old friend, and when I looked at you and two other members of the board, I felt that I had friends here, too."

"You have. I am your friend. That is the reason I cut poor Mrs. Rogers so short. I wanted to be the one to help you, if possible. Angelica Rogers is a good woman, but she never has known the difference in people. Her way is the way to help some girls, but not you."

"I inadvertently heard her agree to Mrs. Flim's statement that I was a lady's maid. I was in the reading room. Of course there is no digrace in being a lady's maid, provided you

are a good one; but I am not one, perhaps because I'd be such a bad one. I realized that Mrs. Rogers was speaking to me as though I were a servant. Perhaps that is why I — I teased her a bit."

"A little teasing doesn't hurt her — poor Angelica! She takes herself so seriously; but then, reformers always do. They must, or the things they are interested in won't come about."

"Well, I am glad my being a lady's maid didn't come about. It is all I can do to dress my own hair," and Mary laughed.

At the sound of her lilting laugh, Mrs. Johnston looked at her keenly. She also noted the slip about dressing her own hair. "Umhum, accustomed to a maid!" she said to herself. Aloud she said:

"You are the culprit who laughed at the close of Mrs. Rogers' prayer. I don't blame you, my dear. I used to have the kind of laugh I couldn't hold in, but I had to get over it. Sometimes it gets the better of me now, but not often. It really is just as amusing to laugh inside one. I want you to come to see me. I am going to see what I can do in the way of a position as governess."

In the meantime Mrs. Rogers inspected with raised skirt and lorgnette, with poor Mrs. Flim

sneezing and apologizing and painfully smiling her paid-for smile.

"The upper hall is too crowded, Mrs. Flim. Whose trunk is this? Too large entirely for a poor girl. A girl who owns a trunk like that has no business applying for a room at an institution like this," asserted Mrs. Rogers. Mrs. Flim had a vague idea that the president expected the owner of the trunk to find sleeping quarters in the tray.

"Yes ma'm!" she gasped. "It belongs to the new young lady, Miss Hill. To be sure it hasn't her initials on the end, but I reckon she bought it second-hand. It's a very fine trunk, I must say. But then, you see she is a foreigner."

CHAPTER VII

Miss Effie Sharp Burton was a quick worker, whether her job was the fitting of a corset or placing a young English person she had met on the train in a comfortable home as nursery governess. On that morning she combined the jobs, fitting corsets steadily and never missing an opportunity to inform her customers of the wonderful chance someone was missing in not snapping up this paragon of efficiency and virtue who had but recently arrived in Richmond.

"And let me tell you, Mrs. Meade, I understand it is all the rage now to have an English governess for your children instead of French. Not that my dear friend can't speak French too — speak it like a native. But everybody knows that in this day and generation English is the thing. The Sulgrave Society is bringing this about. I hear the English are having Americans to teach their kids, and we are reciprocating by having the English rub off some on ours." Miss Burton was engaged in fitting

a long, pink brocade corset on a pretty young woman whose figure showed alarming signs of overweight.

"Yes, dearie, now that is better. This will take care of those extra pounds you have taken on lately. And how is the boy? Of course you named him Henry Marshall Meade, Jr."

"Henry Marshall Meade the Fourth," corrected the young woman.

"Well, if that don't sound like royalty! Of course you have heard that Mrs. Taliaferro Bruce may get an English governess for her children. No, she did not tell me herself, but I was informed on pretty good authority. Seems she —"

"But her children are tiny tots!"

"Sure, but one can't begin too young for English as she is spoke."

"My sister-in-law, Peachy Meade, tells me the children in England have the most picturesque nurses. They dress in long blue capes with little tight bonnets and white lawn strings tied under their chins in big crisp bows. She was abroad for a year. I believe she went to some private theatricals once at a grand estate in the country, and the heroine in the play took the part of a nurse and Peachy said she looked too sweet for anything in the costume. She

was quite daffy about her. She was telling my husband and me about her only the other night. I've forgotten her name, but she was a big bug over there, or kin to them, or something."

"I reckon Miss Peachy met all kinds of fine folks over there; what with her beau being attached to the Court of Saint James. Now, dearie, see if you can sit down comfortable. I don't want any one of my customers ever going out of my fitting room saying they can't sit down comfortable. Now this will take care of you nicely, Mrs. Meade, but please, please, unlace it every time before you take it off. Nothing ruins one like taking it off before you unlace it."

"Oh, but it is such a nuisance and I'm too busy and in too big a hurry," she objected.

"Well, I'm busy and I'm in a hurry too," continued Miss Effie, "but I'd no more take mine off without unlacing it than I'd try to get out of a Ford coupé without opening the door. Speaking of Fords, one time I was in one and had a grand smash up — rolled over an embankment into the creek. I was picked up for dead and hurried to a hospital. Just as they were getting my clothes off I kind of come to. Guess what I said first — showing what my ruling passion was? I said 'Unlace 'em first'."

"Did you really?" asked Mrs. Meade, interested but not at all amused. "And did they?"

"Sure they did. And now shall I send them? Charged? I think I'll telephone Mrs. Taliaferro Bruce about my dear Miss Hill. She may not be exactly suited in governesses and she may even want two. Mrs. Bruce is so up and coming. I reckon she is the most fashionable woman in Richmond."

"I wish you wouldn't do anything about it until I talk things over with my husband. I agree with you; one can't begin too young. I'd like to have an English nursery governess for my son."

"Sure, and many a woman in Richmond will envy the mother that gets Miss Hill. I am sorry for your sake that I have already spoken to at least a dozen of my customers about my little friend. They are all of them interested and I'll wager she gets a good place before night. Of course Mrs. Taliaferro Bruce is such a good customer of mine; that's the reason I thought of 'phoning her. She was just one of the many I had in mind. But since there is only one Miss Hill, only one family can have the benefit of her influence and culture. By the way, she will be here any moment. She is

to lunch with me. Would you like to see her?"

Mrs. Meade would. Before she left the fitting room Mary had arrived and was inquiring for her new old friend. Miss Effie actually ran to meet her and kissed her warmly, exclaiming delightedly over her coming in the nick of time.

"Miss Hill, meet Mrs. Meade," she said by way of introduction. Miss Hill bowed shyly and Mrs. Meade was uncertain whether it was the proper thing to shake hands with a young person who, there was little doubt, was about to be employed in her household as a domestic. In fact, there was no doubt about it, for it was a well-known fact that when Mrs. Henry Marshall Meade III set her heart on something she always got it, although she usually went through the form of consulting Henry Marshall. Now she had set her heart on an English nursery governess for Henry Marshall Meade IV. She was determined Mrs. Taliaferro Bruce should not snap up this treasure, nor were any of her associates in the younger married set to be permitted to snap her up. She would settle the matter forthwith.

"Miss Hill, Miss Effie has been telling me about you. I am wondering if you might not come and — er — er — work for me. That is, be a kind of nursery governess for my son.

Now don't say no, because I have set my heart on it. It is so important for a child to have the proper English accent from the beginning. I am quite astonished when I see how many mothers are careless concerning their children's English, actually encouraging them to speak like the Negroes. I am determined that Henry Marshall Meade the Fourth shall have every advantage that befits one of his blood. Of course I shall want references, Miss Hill. You must have lived with good people in England."

"Oh yes, very good — at least very well thought of."

"How soon could you come to me?"

"To-morrow."

Arrangements were quickly made by the determined Mrs. Meade. She would send for the new governess at ten a. m., and she could immediately enter on her duties with Master Henry Marshall Meade IV.

"And Miss Hill — but perhaps I'd better call you Miss Mary now that you are to be with me — I am very particular in the matter of a uniform for my nursery governesses. Of course I shall insist upon the regulation English one of long cape and tight bonnet. You know the kind I mean?"

"Yes, I know. I — I have worn it before.

I have the very costume of which you speak."

"Splendid!" and Mrs. Meade's eyes glittered.

That afternoon the news was broadcast among the younger married set that Mrs. Henry Marshall Meade, Virginia Wilson that was, had put one over on the crowd. The consensus of opinion was that there would be no living in the same town with her and that Henry Marshall was to be pitied. Henry Marshall IV also came in for his share of condolence. The poor lamb should have a nice colored mammy. Why not? Wasn't a colored mammy good enough for the other Henry Marshalls, First, Second and Third? As for pure English—tommyrot! Virginia Wilson didn't have an R in her alphabet and her favorite expression was: "Between you and I." A mammy could teach a kid how to say Daddy and Mamma quite as properly as a stuck-up English maid. An English nurse's uniform, too! Well, there had been some of them before now in Richmond. Virginia Wilson needn't think she had originated a long blue cape and a close bonnet with white strings. Mrs. Felthaus had an English nurse dressed that way until her children got big enough to wipe their own noses. And the Binghams still had one, but they lived at

Westhampton and the nurse hardly ever came to town. It wasn't exactly un-American to have a white nurse, but it was certainly un-American to have an English one; and it was against all the traditions of the South to have anyone in the nursery but a nice old black mammy.

There were many surmises in regard to wages. Virginia Wilson was extravagant enough in some ways but she never paid high wages. That was one reason she changed maids so often. Anyone listening in on the telephones would hardly have believed it possible that the younger married set could be keeping the wires so hot discussing one of its most intimate friends.

"She doesn't really change servants, servants change her," said one.

"The only reason she keeps her butler is his people belonged to Henry Marshall's people. Old Cy doesn't know he's free yet. Aunt Maria, the cook, is the same way. How do you suppose she will mix the races? My servants wouldn't stand for a white girl."

"Perhaps Virginia's are used to it. You see, she has a white chauffeur. Of course he doesn't eat in."

"Such a nice bright boy is Mike. If it wasn't for him I couldn't stand driving around

with Virginia. He sees my jokes, which Virginia never does. Sometimes he gets so red with suppressed laughter that his freckles disappear and his face looks pink. I wonder how much she pays Mike?"

"More than she would a colored one, I fancy — but then, you know Virginia. Maybe she doesn't."

"Perhaps this English nurse will demand much more than a mammy. I couldn't afford her myself."

"Neither could I, not that I would want her."

"Oh, neither would I."

At both ends of the line hands were placed over the receivers to keep the exclamation from passing over the wire:

"Sour grapes!"

CHAPTER VIII

The friends of Mrs. Henry Marshall Meade might have spared themselves all the worry of conjecture concerning the wages to be paid the English nursery governess. They had quite as much information in regard to her remuneration of that young woman as Mrs. Meade had herself, or as had the new governess, for that matter. This point had not been touched upon by employer or employee. The former had deliberately avoided it, and the latter had not even thought of it. The important thing in Mary's mind was to have an occupation, and she had gladly taken advantage of the offer made by Mrs. Meade that she should assume charge of her young hopeful. Even Miss Effie, whose eyes were ever open to the main chance for her friends as well as herself, while amused that the question of wage had not arisen, agreed with her new friend that the important thing was to get a job.

"If you have a job, it's mighty easy to get another. I got Mrs. Meade's set going, and

they'll all be after you in no time. You'll be in such demand in Richmond that if you'd been triplets you could get good homes for every one of you. Tell me, how did you get along at the boarding home?"

And Mary told her, impersonating Mrs. Flim and Mrs. Angelica Belle Rogers with powers of mimicry that delighted Miss Effie.

"Why, you are as good as a show. I should think you'd go on the stage instead of wasting your time trying to teach babies to speak English. Have you ever thought of going on the stage?"

"Not seriously, but I love theatricals. Perhaps if I hadn't been so fond of acting — but never mind!" and the girl caught her breath.

"Umhum!" thought Miss Effie, "that's the trouble, is it? Got into some mess over private theatricals. I wonder what it was." She then took herself to task for even daring to surmise about her friend's affairs. "She'll tell me when she gets good and ready," concluded Miss Effie.

Mary, in a measure, regretted leaving the boarding home. There was something friendly about the place. It had proven to be a haven of refuge for her on arriving in Richmond. She could never forget its hospitality any more than she could Miss Effie's kindly help on the train.

She wanted to see more of Maggie Cross and the clever big mouthed girl who had sat next to her at breakfast. She had a feeling that she would have enjoyed making Tillie and Gertie like her, which she was sure she could do. Then, too, she was interested in the angel faced girl with the golden red hair, who was evidently the person who kept Mrs. Rogers informed of what the inmates of the boarding home said about her. She regretted not making the acquaintance of Mrs. Prince, regretted not seeing more of Mrs. Flim's paid-for smile. She even felt sorry that she would be absent the next time sausage and buckwheat cakes morning dawned. She would rather like being turned loose in the reading room to sort and straighten the books. There she might again forget herself and dream her way back to the book room she remembered in England — with the trim garden and her Golden Knight hastening down the walk, hastening in search of her.

At ten sharp there was a brisk ringing of the door bell of the boarding home and it was announced that Mrs. Meade's chauffeur had come for Miss Hill. Mike was a pleasant looking, up-standing lad whose kindly blue eyes made the new nursery governess feel that she had one more friend in The United States of

America. He looked at the girl curiously but respectfully.

"Are you the lady who is to nurse the little b'y?"

"I am the one who is to teach him," smiled Mary.

"Well! Well! And Mrs. Meade says I am to fetch your things along."

"Here is my small luggage," indicating the several pieces ranged in the hall, brought down by the obliging butler who was still in a broad grin over the generous, unexpected and unusual tip given him by the English girl. "I have a large box — er, trunk that you could not carry."

"Then I'll phone for a baggage man. I hope for your sake it is not very large, miss, because you'll have to sleep in it if it is. The missis has been busy all morning bossing the job of turning a bit of a store room into a bedroom for ye that's full of her own trunks. She's already performed a miracle with a cot and a dresser — but there, I mustn't be after discouraging ye."

"Oh, but my box is very large — huge in fact. It's a pity it isn't larger if I am to sleep in it," and Mary laughed her lilting laugh, laughed her way right into Mike's heart.

"I guess I can shift the things some and make room for your things,' he said, "but I'll thank ye not to mention the fact to Mrs. Meade. You see, miss, I hired to her husband for a chauffeur, and if I let down the bars in one place she'll have me doing the washing and ironing and making up beds before I can stop her. The missis is a great one for enlarging your sphere," and Mike's eyes twinkled as he helped his charge into the handsome closed car and carefully placed her many pieces of baggage in beside her.

Under the chauffeur's sure guidance the great car glided rapidly and smoothly northward. After several blocks they turned westward.

"This is Franklin Street," volunteered Mike. "It's where Richmond folks used to want to go after they died if they weren't living here already. There's the Woman's Club. I can't tell you much about that, never having been closer than parking space. Business is taking this part of town and people are moving off and leaving their homes to boarders. But some of the best ones are still hanging on. A block north, up that way, a lady lives in a house whose yard takes up more than half a square, right in the business section, and she says she's going to stay there as long as she lives and when she

dies she's going to be cremated and keep her ashes there. You see the city authorities wouldn't allow her to be *buried* there, but ashes are strictly sanitary."

Mary laughed delightedly and peered curiously up the street, spying in the distance a substantial red brick mansion surrounded by an ivy-grown wall.

"They tell me the novelist, Miss Mary Johnston, used to live in this row and wrote some of her big books here. Later she moved to the mountains. Down yonder, a block south, Miss Ellen Glasgow lives. I reckon you know about those ladies."

"Indeed I do."

"Plenty of rich folks live along here, some alive and some dead. There's the Second Baptist church. Don't ask me where the first one is, because I don't know. One time a stranger asked what the altitude of Richmond was and he was told: 'Mostly Baptist.' There's the Jefferson Hotel. Swell place they say, but I reckon the likes of us wouldn't get much show there."

The girl gasped as though a pail of cold water had been thrown in her face. It was all very well for Mrs. Meade's chauffeur to point out places of interest on Richmond's thorough-

fares, making amusing comments as he did so, but to have him class her with himself with his "likes of us" — well, this was somewhat disconcerting. What would a certain disagreeable old woman in England say to it? The thought of the old woman made Mary smile and then laugh. She took herself to task sharply. She must remember that the old life was over with and the new life begun. She was a nursery governess on her way to her first situation. Whether she could hold it or not remained to be seen. Mike had intended no insult. Perhaps he even meant to compliment her. At any rate, he was a kindly, pleasant young man, whose intention evidently was to please and befriend her. The Irish in him appealed to the Irish in her. She laughed again and asked him if he had always lived in Richmond or how did he know so much about it.

"No, miss, I have been here only three years, but I worked on a sight-seeing bus-line for a while and I had to get up a line of talk for tourists. I've been after getting it off on ye."

"Then please tell me everything."

"This is the Commonwealth Club. They do say it pretty near went out of business when prohibition hit the country, but I fancy they must be making a profit off tea drinking, be-

cause they built an addition and they hit it up pretty lively. Now this is Monroe Park. A great place for nurses and babies. I guess you and the young'un will spend lots of time down here. It's a pretty spot in spring."

Monroe Park is a pretty spot at any time, and on that frosty February morning it seemed very beautiful to the girl who had been too "long in city pent." The fountain was frozen in great white stalactite-like masses which glistened and sparkled in the sun. The Sacred Heart Cathedral formed a background of soft, blue grey. A few negro nurses were seated on the benches, shapeless masses from the many layers of clothing in which they were swathed to keep out the cold, while some of their charges lay snugly sleeping in baby carriages and others ran around the park shouting and playing, their spirits high from the frost in the air. Their bright sweaters made pleasant bits of color in the general somberness of the scene.

"Now, miss, here is where Franklin Street jazzes up a bit and turns itself into Monument Avenue. That statue there is of General Stuart. They say he was a grand soldier, but I must say his monument looks to me kind o' like an iron paper weight. Now the next one is General Robert E. Lee."

"How beautiful it is!" exclaimed the girl. She gazed at it with shining eyes, turning and looking at it from the rear window of the car until the outlines were lost in the frosty haze. The peace, dignity and poise of the equestrian statue of the great man entered her soul. She decided she had another friend in Richmond and wished she had known about him when she appeared before the Board, feeling sure General Lee's name would have had great weight with Mrs. Rogers.

"Here we are, Miss!"

The car drew up in front of a handsome house, very like all the other houses in that it had three stories, was built of brick trimmed with granite, had a broad pleasant looking front porch with white painted pillars and a small terraced grass plot.

"Yes, here we are — but before I turn you loose, miss, please don't take it hard if I tell you to keep a sharp eye on the mistress. Make her settle in the beginning what you are to do, and stick to it. Mrs. Meade's all right, but as I told you she is great on widening the spheres of those that work for her. Those are her very words, ones she got off on me when she wanted me to run the electric washer every Monday morning and the vacuum cleaner in between

times. That was when her nurse was leaving. I knew mighty well if I got to widening my sphere too much I'd be like the song says:

"'I'm the bo's'n tight and the midshipmite
And the crew of the captain's brig.'

Now you are hired to nurse —"

"No, teach!"

"Well, teach, if that suits you any better, but whatever it is, don't be letting the mistress widen your sphere."

Mary laughed delightedly. Somehow she didn't feel at all downhearted. Life was certainly very amusing, a greater adventure even than death. She wished now that she had thought to ask the chauffeur to tell her of her charge. She knew nothing except that it was a boy, named for his father, grandfather and great grandfather. She liked boys — always had. She wondered how old the little fellow was. Mrs. Meade had been very noncommital on the subject in the few moments she had given to engaging the new nursery governess. She had asked for a reference but had been given none. Mary patted her pocket to be sure the precious document was safe.

The door was opened by a preposterous look-

ing housemaid, much out of keeping with the elegance and rich furnishings of the house. Some attempt had evidently been made to tone down this colored Blanche into the semblance of a house servant, but it would have taken more than black dress, snowy apron and cap to accomplish the desired effect. The cap was on crooked, and all around it bristled stiff pigtails wrapped with strings. The apron, a small ruffled affair, was spotlessly clean, and well it might be, since it had been carefully turned around to the back where it protected that portion that doesn't usually get soiled in ordinary housework. The girl had a good-natured grin on her flat brown face and Mary decided quickly: "Another friend."

CHAPTER IX

"Miss 'Ginia air a gittin' her haid washed an' she say fer me ter show you up ter yo' so-called room an' git you kinder settled like befo you begins nussin'. Humph! You sho is got plenty er berlises," declared Blanche as Mike returned to the car for the hat box. "Some likes ter carry they b'longings 'roun' in berlises but I's allus been a great han' fer a trunk. Trunks ain't so handy fer liftin' an' gittin' away quick an' easy, but fer all that I likes a place whar I kin put ev'thing, waises, skirts an' all, an' lock 'em up."

"I, too, but my trunk will come later. The chauffeur has telephoned about it."

"Gawd! Whar you reckon you gonter put it?"

The room destined for the new governess was a veritable "third floor back" which Mrs. Meade had been using as a trunk room. Although the place had been cleared out somewhat to make room for its intended occupant, three or four trunks and a cedar packing chest

had been left in the room. The furnishings were very meager, a sharp contrast to the lavish display of old mahogany and oriental rugs Mary had glimpsed in passing up the two flights of stairs. However, the room was warm and clean, still smelling of the scrubbing of the morning, and the one window facing the south insured plenty of sunshine. Mike deposited the suit case, hat box and traveling case on the cedar chest, then turned and pointed scornfully at the row of trunks.

"What'd I tell ye? No room for anything else. I'll pile 'em up now while I'm here. Or, better still, I'll haul them up to the attic."

"I low you'd better not pile 'em up," protested Blanche, "'cause Miss 'Ginia air all time wantin' ter git in 'em. But I reckon she wouldn't mind their bein' in the attic. She wanted Uncle Cy ter fotch 'em up thar this mornin' but he done cotched a stitch in his side an' wa' kinder 'posed ter lif'n up weights. Miss 'Ginia lowed as how she dassent arsk you, Mr. Mike, cause you were kinder proudified since Marse Henry done cided ter buy that big Abe Lincoln car. She says the folks what own jitney cars gits lots mo' out'n they shovers than the ones what owns big ones. Anyhow she thought the trunks wouldn't be in the white

nuss's way 'cause she could kinder make out ter sit on 'em."

"Widening their sphere, too," Mary suggested.

"Well, I'm not too proud to carry these trunks up in the attic for ye," Mike said, "or do anything else for that matter; but it's not as a chauffeur I'm after doing it."

Mary had a tip ready for the obliging Mike, but something in his kindly Irish eyes told her tipping would be out of taste. Again she took herself to task. In these United States were not Mike and she in the same walk of life? Why should she tip Mike any more than he should tip her? However, there was nothing in the eyes of Blanche that made tipping seem out of taste. On the contrary, Blanche gave her to understand that she was responsible for the smell of soap and water that still lingered around the tiny room, also that if she had had her way there would "a been a curting at the winder an' a piece er cyarpet on the flo', as they wasn't nothin' what homelified a room lak curtings an' cyarpets."

Mary tendered a quarter, and while Blanche did not refuse it, neither did she take it, but announced in the tone of one bargaining:

"Cose I's bleeged fer the money, but I'd

ruther ter have one er yo' ol' waises if you air got one ter spare. I gits a quarter an' it jes' melts away. But whin I gits a wais I air got something to show an' wear."

Mary promised to see when her trunk arrived if she could find something Blanche would like.

"I'd ruther any day ter have a wais or skirt or something white folks done been a wearin' than anything new. It looks lak white folks kinder put a spell on clothes an' they gits a set to 'em that stays. I sho do lak yo' hat. How much did you pay fer it?"

"I don't remember,' laughed Mary, "but it really isn't very smart."

"Lawd love us, lady, I never said there was any sense in yo' hat. I jes' said I thought it wa' pretty. I never yet heard tell of a smart hat. If there is sech a thing as that I'd sho love to have one, 'cause I mought git some sense in my haid from wearin' it. I'd certainly 'stonish Uncle Cy an' Aunt Maria if I got some sense. Uncle Cy don't think I got a bit but he don't say so 'cause he ain't no blood kin ter me. But Aunt Maria is my own wedded Aunt on my paw's side, an' she don't make no mind ter tell me 'bout a hunderd times a day that I'se a plum idjit."

"That isn't very kind of her," suggested Mary.

"She ain't meanin' kindness ner unkindness. She's jes' statin' the fac'. Folks is been tellin' me all my life that I ain't smart, but I thinks sometimes they is mo' or less foolish theyselbes ter be a tellin' me something I already knows. If they'd try ter learn me, 'stid er tellin' me I don't know nothin', I'd git along better. I knows enough not ter tech what don't b'long ter me, an' I knows enough not ter lie useless like."

"That is being very wise, Blanche. Perhaps it is wiser never to lie at all. What do you think?"

"I don't think — I *knows*. Now if I hadn't kinder lied to the shover 'bout what Miss 'Ginia said about she dassen't ask him ter carry them trunks up in the attic, he wouldn't a teched 'em. I knowed well enough she wanted 'em up there. It wa'n't a black out'n out lie an' it wa'n't out'n out truth."

"We might call it diplomacy," suggested Mary. "But where is my charge? I mean the little boy I am to teach."

"Bless you, he's sleep. But tell me, lady, what's yo' name? Miss 'Ginia done call you Goobernuss but that ain't no name. Down

where I come from we calls peanuts goobers, but there aint no folks named that."

"My name is Mary Hill."

"Then us all'll call you Miss Mary. Miss Mary, Miss 'Ginia say when you res' yo' hat she'll be pleased ter see you in her boodah."

"But who is Miss 'Ginia?"

Blanche laughed loud and long, showing every white tooth in her big mouth. "Lawsa-mussy on us! Done come ter nuss fer folks an' don't know they name. Miss 'Ginia is the missus. She's Marse Henry Marshall's wedded wife."

"Oh, Mrs. Meade! I *am* stupid Blanche. I thought perhaps she was the housekeeper."

"No'm, she ain't much of a one. To tell you the truth, Miss Mary, Uncle Cy am the housekeeper in this place. He phomes fer 'visions an' then he goes in an' tells Miss 'Ginia we is outer butter an' sugar an' how 'bout roas' lamb an' limon pie fer dinner. Sometimes he gits a early start an' takes a market baskit an' goes down ter the ol' markit, that's way down town, an' he brings it back cram full er eats. Yessum, Uncle Cy does the orderin' an' Aunt Maria does the cookin' an' Miss 'Ginia sots back an' gits the credit whilst Marse Hinery does the payin'. Miss 'Ginia

jes' ev'y now'n then puts in her lip ter show 'em who is boss, but she mos' times gibs 'em what she calls cyarteblosh. I reckon that means ter go way an' let her sleep. You see, Uncle Cy an' Aunt Maria been all time buttlin' an' cookin' fer the Meadses—that is Marse Hinery's maw an' paw — an' when Miss 'Ginia married young Marse Hinery she jes' kinder married the help along with him. She don't never have no trouble keepin' them 'cause they kinder belongs ter Marse Hinery. The onlies' trouble Miss 'Ginia ever has is with house maids an' nusses. You see, Aunt Maria is proudified an' rombossy, an' she treats the others so hotty that they are all time up an' leavin. That's the reason Mis 'Ginia puts up with me, cause you see I'm something fer Aunt Maria ter pick on an' she lets the nuss alone an' takes it out on me."

"That's hard on you I should think," suggested Mary, who felt that Blanche would give her a line on her employer's household that might help her to keep her head in what she fancied was going to prove a difficult situation.

"Lawd love you, Miss Mary, I don't mind Aunt Maria any mo'n I would a bumpin' bug a buzzin'. 'Mandy uster be kinder uppity sometimes when Aunt Maria would git on the rampage, but 'Mandy wa' yaller skinned, an' yaller

gals won't take much off'n dark complected folks. Who's 'Mandy? Why she wa' the nuss what Miss 'Ginia sent off las' night. I felt kinder sorry fer 'Mandy 'cause she had done obligated herself ter pay fer a rabbit skin coat, an' losin' her job this week kinder cuts in on her style. But she's a likely gal an' I reckon she'll git another soon. Co'se Miss 'Ginia talked it out with Aunt Maria an' Uncle Cy ter see if they'd put up with a white lady a goober-nussin', an' they lowed there wa'nt nothin' like tryin' a thing oncet. Of course we alls is kinder uster white help, what with Mr. Mike a shoverin'. But he don't eat with us alls. An' now I reckon' we'd bes' be showin' ourselves ter Miss 'Ginia."

CHAPTER X

The morning had been a strenuous one for Mrs. Meade. In the first place, she had neglected the evening before to inform her lord and master that she had put one over on her friends by snapping up the young English woman to look after the manners and speech of the heir apparent; also that she had seen fit to dismiss the likely yellow girl who had been serving as nurse to Master Meade. Mrs. Meade had a habit of neglecting to inform her husband of anything — of which he was sure to disapprove — until it was too late for him to interfere. Her favorite time for approaching him was in the morning, while he was in the throes of dressing; the crucial moment of the fitting of collar button in button hole being the preferred one. No doubt that moment was chosen because of the fact that although Henry Marshall Meade was one of the ablest business men in Richmond, with many irons in the commercial fire and with a remarkable power of grasping the details of his several ventures and

holding them separate and distinct in his well-ordered mind, he was, nevertheless, unable to button his collar with divided attention. On that morning he had an unusually difficult time, having recently arrived at the stage where a quarter of a size increase in shirt bands and collars had become urgent without his realizing it.

"Damn it all! My collars have shrunk up," he exclaimed. "Oh, excuse me, Virginia. I reckon I'll have to give up my favorite expression when the kid begins to take notice."

"Oh, don't mind me, Henry. Of course it isn't the collar; it's your neck that's the matter. You are getting so terribly fat. I really think you must either diet or take Turkish baths. I am going to do both. All of my set are going in for Turkish baths. As for your swearing before our son, I hope you will try to stop. I dont believe you realize how important it is that Henry Marshall Meade the Fourth should start right in the matter of — er — er — accent and all."

"Yes I do, and I can assure you my accent, when it comes to a plain unvarnished 'damn,' is as pure as the snow on the roof of a convent," and Henry struggled violently to make ends meet.

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of that — I mean

of the way little Henry says damn, which I hope he won't do at all — and as for snow on a convent roof, I am sure what snow lands and sticks on the Cathedral roof gets just as black and dirty as it does on the buildings around. Of course a convent is where nuns stay and there are only priests at the Cathedral, but I do not believe that makes any difference in the snow."

Mr. Meade paused in his struggles and looked at his wife quizzically, his face and neck reddening with suppressed laughter.

"Why, Henry! You look as though you might have apoplexy any moment. Maisie Brown was telling me only yesterday that the doctor had told her husband he simply must reduce. He had the most convincing statistics showing how many fat corpses there were. But we were speaking of the importance of our son's education."

"Oh, were we?"

"I think we cannot begin too soon to give him the very best. I can't bear to have him grow up speaking like a darkey. It will shame him so when he goes to a northern university."

"Which he will not do," firmly. "The University of Virginia is where my son is going. I don't know where yours is going."

"Why, Henry! You sound as though we had twins or a divorce or something. But never mind that. I am interested in the education of Henry Marshall Meade the Fourth, if you are not. What is the good of an education if you say 'flo' and 'do' as some of the children do in Virginia, and so I have taken the bull by the horns and dismissed Amanda."

"Was that necessary?"

"Why, certainly, I had to dismiss her before —"

"But I mean taking the bull by the horns. That seems so cruel, my dear — kind of like a Wild West melodrama," and with a mighty tug Mr. Meade buttoned his collar, and rapidly tying his cravat, turned a beaming face on his wife and, to her surprise and discomfiture, kissed her pretty face.

"Now, my dear Virginia, tell us what it is all about. You have dismissed Amanda so that our son may go to a northern university. But tell me, pray, what is to be done with him for the next nineteen years or so."

"I was coming to that. I have engaged an English girl as nursery governess. She will be here to-day."

"The devil you have and she will! And what on earth is a nursery governess to teach

a kid who has not yet acquired backbone enough to sit up in his buggy? Of course I know I am only a poor worm of a man, but please tell me why have you decided on this course."

"Well, the chance was too good to miss. If I had waited, some of the others would have had this new girl. In fact, Mrs. Taliaferro Bruce was dying for her and I got her from right under her nose. The ones in our set are simply wild with envy about it. And you know, Henry, our son must lead instead of following. His ancestors have led and I am sure you are better than any of the business men in Richmond in your line."

"And what do you know about this English woman?"

"She has excellent recommendations."

"From whom?"

"From — from — her former employers in England, of course. She is very pretty, too, and not a woman at all. She is to wear the uniform worn by English nurses. You remember your sister told us about how picturesque they were — a long cape and tight little bonnet."

"Ah, I see. The boy must have a picturesque setting. For my part, I think a nice old mammy in a head kerchief is more picturesque than any red faced English nurse maid.

I bet she has a Cockney accent and neglected teeth. I wish you would get a mammy, Virginia. They are so faithful and safe."

"Now, Henry, how many times must I tell you that Aunt Maria and a mammy nurse can't get along? It is all I can do to keep the peace between Aunt Maria and Uncle Cy. The only thing to do is have the other servants so young that the old ones can pick on them safely. Of course you realize how important Aunt Maria and Uncle Cy are to our menage."

"I give in. But how about their standing for this new white girl?"

"I've fixed that. You see, she is not a servant exactly and they are to call her Miss Mary and she is to have her meals in the pantry. She is to have entire charge of the boy and sleep in the trunk room. That will make it easy for us to go out at night whenever we choose, as the girl knows nobody in Richmond and will have no where to spend her evenings."

"Might a mere man ask how much you will have to pay for this paragon of a milkmaid?"

"Why, yes, you can ask all you've a mind, but to tell the truth, Henry, I did not come to terms with Miss Mary."

"Didn't she ask? She must be a fool."

"Oh, no, not at all. She just trusted me to do the right thing. I thought I should consult you before I made an agreement with her."

"Thanks awfully! And now what do you want me to say?"

"Say how much you think I should give her."

"I should think she would come for nothing since she has no other place to spend her time. In fact, we might get some rent from her for the trunk room. Rents are very high in Richmond and trunk rooms are in great demand."

"Oh, Henry, you must be joking."

"Never more serious in my life. The barmaid is without doubt a moron and will be a great care to us. She should have to pay for shifting the responsibility to perfect strangers. Surely you will not entrust our young hopeful to her. I don't think it is safe."

"Oh, Henry, now I know you are joking. I can't see that you are in the least funny. You and your sister are both very provoking, always pretending to be in earnest. Nobody likes a good joke better than I do, but I must say I want to know it is a joke before I laugh. Another thing; this young girl is neither a milkmaid nor a barmaid, but a perfectly respectable nursery governess who is a lady in spite of the fact that she is to eat in the pantry."

"Why not? Wasn't the queen in the kitchen eating bread and honey? If a queen can eat in the kitchen, surely a plain, if perfect, lady can eat in the pantry. But tell me something more about this imbecile. How old is she?"

"I did not ask. She is young, though, and very respectful and is accustomed to wearing a uniform. Miss Effie Sharp Burton — you know the nice woman I have fit my corsets — is a great friend of hers and you know Miss Effie is very respectable, even if her hair is variegated."

Having calmed her husband into the semblance of acquiesence, the next thing on Mrs. Meade's programme was the cleaning and clearing out of the trunk room. At the same time Henry Marshall Meade IV must be attended to. Aunt Maria must leave her kitchen and take the place of the dismissed Amanda, while Uncle Cy did Aunt Maria's work and Blanche scrubbed the trunk room. At ten sharp Winnie was to arrive. Winnie was a mulatto woman who constituted a kind of visiting beauty parlor in that she shampooed and curled hair, manicured nails, massaged faces and necks, and even went farther if paid extra. She had a weekly engagement with every member of "the set." While she worked she made her-

self extremely agreeable, retailing any news she might have gathered on her rounds. She had a rare character for a person bearing the reputation of a news-monger, and that was that she was perfectly truthful. She always repeated what she had actually heard, no more and no less. Her interpretation was usually a kindly one and her customers felt safe in her hands. They told her what they wanted repeated and they were sure it would be broadcast *verbatim*. No matter how full Mrs. Meade's morning, nothing could persuade her to break an engagement with Winnie, certainly not on this morning when the new governess was arriving. She was determined that Winnie should see her find, and she knew that the joyful news would go forth that Henry Marshall Meade IV would lead as had his ancestors — that is, the ones on his father's side. She wished the new governess might make her appearance in bonnet and cape, but of course that was too much to hope for.

Winnie had done Mrs. Meade to a turn; having, as it were, gone the whole hog in the way of shampooing, manicuring and massaging. When the new governess entered, an electric fan was rapidly drying the recently washed hair, which shone with an added lustre because of a

few drops of "something" Winnie had put in the final rinsing water. After the drying came the curling, and Winnie was busily preparing the electric irons for the topping off process.

The interview was soon over. Winnie was sufficiently impressed by the lovely English girl to put her whole heart in informing her clientele of Mrs. Meade's good management in having procured such a treasure. That was the real object in having Mary report while Winnie was there. Nothing was said of what the duties were to be and the matter of compensation was not touched upon.

"And my pupil?" asked the girl.

"He is still asleep. I'll call you when he wakes up. Yes, he sleeps a great deal. I have always had him next to me. Mr. Meade would not hear of the nursery being on the third floor, where I had planned to have it. I hope you will be comfortable and that you found your room all right."

"Very nice, thank you."

While Mrs. Meade was pleased with her new governess, she felt in her heart that she was a little too assured in her manner, had too much poise. And then there was a sparkle in her eye that came and went, and in some uneasy way reminded the lady of a similar look in the

eyes of her husband and sister-in-law. It was always there when they were joking and pretended not to be. Of course this English person could not be joking. What was there to joke about?

CHAPTER XI

The new governess went back to her trunk room, shut the door, sat down on the cedar chest and laughed and laughed, and then had all she could do to keep from weeping. Again she took herself to task:

"Now don't behave like the heroine in an early Victorian novel and 'fly to the east room and weep bitterly.' In the first place, this is not an east room. It faces the south and has a cheerful outlook on the garages and small gardens of the èlite of Richmond. Brace up, *alias* Mary Hill, and be glad you have such a nice rain proof roof over your head and a pleasant, scrubbed room with a southern exposure. Perhaps some day you may have a 'curting' at the window and a 'piece of cyarpet' on the floor."

Her trunk had come while she was having the interview with the mistress. Mike had seen to it that it was placed in a convenient spot and that it was unstrapped. The girl busied herself unpacking a few necessary articles of

clothing, among other things a long blue cloth cape and small blue bonnet with white lawn strings. Her expression as she placed the bonnet on the foot of the bed was for a moment both sad and bitter. She held the cape up in front of her and gave it a vicious little shake.

"I'm glad I brought you, anyhow. I'll call you my mantle of *aliases* and I'll wager you will cover more than a mantle of charity. You, little bonnet, may be a fool's cap, but you fit me for the time being at least. Oh, Mary, Mary, quite contrary!"

Her thoughts were interrupted by the sound of lusty yells coming from the second floor, and soon a breathless Blanche broke into her room.

"The baby done woke up!"

"What baby is it?"

"Yo' baby fer sho! Leastways the baby what you is gonter nuss. Miss 'Ginia says fer you ter step down stairs."

"But, Blanche — tell me, please — how old is this baby?"

"He ain't no age, Miss Mary. He ain't much mo'n bawn. Leastways this time las' year he wa'n't bawn. I come ter town ter git kinder house broke, seein' as how I been mos'ly workin' in the fields in 'backer patches an' sich. Leastways it wa' some time whilst it wa' yit

warm weather, maybe a little after big meetin' time in 'Melia County, an' the baby wa'n't bawn then but he 'rived not long after I did. We was mos' twinses in 'rivin'."

Mary gasped and then laughed.

"All right Blanche, I'll come down immediately."

"Befo' you goes, Miss Mary, is you foun' me ary wais' in yo' trunk?"

"Not yet, Blanche, but no doubt I have a blouse you can wear."

"I ain't 'ticular 'bout its blousin', jes' so it's a wais'."

Winnie had departed, leaving Mrs. Meade in a pleasant frame of mind, curled and flattered. She felt assured that those in Richmond who really mattered would soon know of her having acquired the extra distinction of a nursery governess who would teach her offspring the purest English. The crying of the baby recalled to her mind that she had not divulged to the new governess that her charge had not yet cut his teeth. This had been as deliberate on her part as neglecting to inform her husband of the dismissal of the likely yellow girl and the employment of Miss Mary Hill. She knew that the English girl would be astonished at the extreme

youthfulness of her charge, but she was determined to brazen it through. She had acquired something that, according to Miss Effie Sharp Burton, was in great demand; and having acquired it she was going to make the best of it. Of course Miss Mary must be the nurse, as Aunt Maria and Uncle Cy could not have nursing added to their other duties and Blanche was not to be trusted. Miss Mary would nurse the baby but would be spoken of as an English nursery governess. Once the baby began to talk he would astonish all Richmond by his pure English accent. Whether it turned out well or not, at least she would have the satisfaction of having snapped up something that was wanted by others, especially by Mrs. Taliaferro Bruce. Now for breaking to Miss Mary what her real duties for the time being would be!

"Ah, come in, Miss Mary — your little pupil is awake. He never cries except when he first awakens. That is good for him, so the doctor tells me — expands his chest and clears out his lungs. I know you will love him. He is a splendid boy, and so good and so healthy. Really not a bit of trouble," and so the mother rattled on while the baby in the next room lustily bellowed. "I think he has expanded his chest enough now so we can go in and take him up."

The nursery was a down-to-date one with every known appliance for raising babies by hand — kitchenette, private bath, refrigerator, kiddy koop, patent adjustable crib, etc. In this crib lay a real love of a baby. Mary's heart went out to him as he raised his dimpled arms to her. The moment his eyes rested on her he stopped crying and began to crow.

"Look! Look! He likes me!" she cried, and with a skill acquired she knew not how, she lifted the child from his cradle and hugged him to her. She did not remember ever before having had a baby in her arms. Yes, she had smiled at babies in the London parks as they lay in their perambulators, but English nurses are strict with passers-by. Never would she have been allowed to touch one, even had she felt the urge. But this baby, this little American boy, was to be hers to care for and he had put out his sturdy little arms to her, although his mother had been standing by.

"Oh, Mrs. Meade, can you trust him to me? I'll try so hard to care for him and no harm shall come to him through my neglect. Just tell me what I am to do and I shall try to do it."

Mrs. Meade beamed. Everything was working out exactly as she had planned. She had

not dared hope that no explanations would be necessary concerning the extreme youthfulness of Henry Marshall Meade IV.

"I am sure you will do quite nicely," she said, trying not to sound too elated. "As for what you are to do, of course you will have entire charge of the baby. He has an abundance of clothes and he must be kept spotlessly clean. I do not ask you to do any laundry work and you need not economize in baby clothes but use all that is necessary. This is the kitchenette and this is the refrigerator where his milk is kept. Here are printed instructions as to how his food is prepared, also minute details as to feeding and sleeping. I have a baby specialist who has worked out this schedule for my son. He must sleep just so long and eat just so much. You can read for yourself what he says. Here also are books on the care and feeding of babies. I think this is the best one of all, and my doctor likes what it says about babies very much, although as a rule he does not think much of baby books. I will leave you now. You will follow instructions about taking baby out for the afternoon — in uniform of course."

"Of course — and in a pram?"

"Pram? Oh yes, you mean buggy. Cer-

tainly in a pram. By the way, I furnish aprons."

"Aprons?"

"Yes, aprons — for you to nurse in." Mrs. Meade began to think her new nursery governess was almost stupid. "Anything you don't understand about just ask Aunt Maria, the cook. She knows all about what is required for babies and I am sure will help you all she can at first until you get used to the place. Now it is time to feed him. His bottles are all done for the day. That is one thing I have found it necessary to attend to myself, but now you are here I can let you do it. I couldn't exactly trust the darkeys who have nursed him up to this time. They are careless. You, I am sure, are different."

"Certainly I shall not be careless, but I am inexperienced. I have never taken care of — of — so small a child before."

"Oh well, children are children, and I have always heard a child of five months is far easier to take care of than an older one. I must not forget the references you said you could furnish. Mr. Meade was most particular in wishing to see them. I will hold baby while you go get them."

Again the nursery governess flew to the

trunk room, holding her hand over her mouth as she ran up the steps. She got in and shut the door before the laugh rippled out. The thought of the disagreeable old woman in England and what she would think of aprons being furnished, and the great concession granted by the mistress in not requiring her to do the laundry, had got the better of her risibles.

"Oh, Mary, Mary, keep your head!"

As soon as she could compose her features she hurried back to the nursery, holding the required references in her hand. Mrs. Meade examined the envelope with much satisfaction. It was of heavy vellum, with an insignia on the flap that looked as though it might be a coat of arms. The same delightful imprint was at the top of the note paper and under it a monogram —— M. D. The reference was short and to the point.

To whom it may concern:

Mary Hill has lived with me for many years and I can recommend her as honest, intelligent and of a cheerful disposition. She is remarkably healthy, never, to my knowledge, having been ill but once in her life.

Lady Mary Dale.

"Lady Mary Dale! Oh, then you must have lived with the nobility. How interesting!"

"Not very. In fact, not so interesting as other persons. I hope you find my references satisfactory, Mrs. Meade."

"Perfectly so! And now I must run. I have a million things to do in the shops and then luncheon at the Country Club. Keep baby out a long time, but be sure and feed him according to directions."

And Mrs. Henry Marshall Meade was gone and our English Mary was left alone with a five months old baby to feed and keep spotlessly clean and put to sleep according to schedule. She had never before held a little baby in her arms. She held him off from her and laughed. The baby liked the music of it and laughed back.

"Well, well, my American sweetheart, I am honest, intelligent and healthy, as is written by a member of the nobility, so surely I can take care of a wee man like you, especially with the doctor book and Aunt Maria to show me. So here goes!"

CHAPTER XII

Aunt Maria was cross, so cross that Uncle Cy and Blanche gave her a wide berth.

"Sis Maria ain't ter say los' her temper, but she's sho' mislaid it," Cy advised Blanche, "an it is bes' fer me'n you not ter git in her way, 'cause we might ter say step in between her an' her temper at the very moment when she might be gittin' ready ter pick it up. I ain't blamin' her much, 'cause this thing of servin' extry meals am a nuisance. Miss 'Ginia done come along so sof' like a tellin' us of the new nuss that me'n Sis Maria couldn't say a word. We alls ain't held much to 'Mandy, 'though she wa' right likely lookin'. She wa' a little too free niggerish fer Sis Maria an' me, but that ain't a sayin' we wanted Miss 'Ginia ter be a hirin' a white nuss what had ter eat in the butler's pantry."

"But, Uncle Cy, you ain't seed her yet. She ain't gonter be no trouble an' if she is I'm here ter take it," said Blanche. "She got ways like a angel an' a laugh like a mocking bird settin'

on a swingin' lim'. I can't see what she's a doin', goin' out ter service with them hands er hern as white as weddin' cake icin' an' her finger nails all pink an' pretty like Miss 'Ginia's after Miss Winnie gits through with her."

"You mean, Blanche, that this new nuss am folks?"

"Folks? I should say she is — an' folksy folks at that."

"Well, wherefo' did Miss 'Ginia say she wa' quite a lady if she air sho nuf folks? Everybody knows that quite a lady means she ain't quite a lady. Fact is, child, that when Miss 'Ginia gits a goin' she gits a goin', an' Shockoe Creek would have ter rise mighty high ter stop her. She got hell-bent on havin' this so-called lady a nussin', an' have her she would. I heard her a phonin' all yesterday evenin'. One time I thought she mus' be gettin' ready ter have a tea party or something, but Lawd love you, she wa' jes' infawmin' her friends of what a treasure she had picked up an' how Mrs. Taliaferro Bruce was after her. I'm a wonderin' what Marse Henry thinks about it all."

"I reckon he thinks what young niggers thinks — that buckeyes is biscuit. Sometimes I thinks Miss 'Ginia got that whiteman fooled —"

"Watch out, gal! Watch out! Don't you be a callin' Marse Henry no whiteman. Leastways not runnin' it all together thataway. I knows he's a man, an' I knows he's white, but I ain't a gonter set still an' have no nigger wench a callin' him 'whiteman.' I been belongin' ter the Marshall Meades all my life an' my pappy an' grandpappy befo' me an' theirs befo' them — "

"Bless Bob, Uncle Cy, I ain't meanin' ter be callin' Mr. Meade out'n his name. You mus' 'scuse me. I done called Miss 'Ginia whiteooman ter you this mornin' an' you ain't said peep turkey 'bout it, an' how was I ter know I couldn't call him whiteman?"

"If you don't know the diffunce 'tween the Marshall Meades an' the Wilsons, 'tain't fer me ter try ter bring you through. On the other hand, if you don't know that diffunce you needn't be a makin' out ter tell me the new nuss air a lady bawn, 'cause I tell you right here you ain't no jedge. Now I ain't a puttin' down Miss 'Ginia as not mighty fine an' up an' comin' — but what I'm a doin' is placin' my white folks whar they b'longs, an' that is on the topmost branch of the fambly tree. The Wilson's fambly tree by the side of ourn, ain't mo'n a field pine by the side of a fust growth

oak. I ain't a sayin' they ain't good folks enough in their way, an' I reckon they've laid up some money an' owned they home since befo' the war, but that ain't nothin' ter my folks. Th'ain't hardly a monumint in Richmond that ain't got some er us's blood in their veins."

During this conversation Uncle Cy and Blanche were in the butler's pantry rubbing silver. Aunt Maria was in the kitchen furiously rattling her pots and pans and in a rumbling bass she was singing a hymn, the refrain of which was:

"No hiding place down here."

"If you don't believe me," continued Uncle Cy —

"But I do!" admitted Blanche.

Uncle Cy had no idea of giving up his argument because of having convinced the repentant Blanche, and so he continued:

"If you don't believe me, jes' look at this here silver. Every bit of it Henry or Marshall or Meade silver! The onlies' way you kin make a W fer Wilson out er any of these markings is ter turn the M's upsidedown. An' I tells you the M's wa' sho turned upsidedown when Marse Henry married into the W's. It looked like some of the fambly des' couldn't git over it. Miss Lizzie Somer was the worstest, but

she an' Miss 'Ginia air a gittin' 'long right peaceable here lately."

"I think Miss 'Ginia air mighty prutty, Uncle Cy."

"She air that, pow'ful prutty."

"She sho is," continued Blanche. "She air prutty jes' like a cow — an' there ain't nothin' prettier than a nice clean cow ter my way er thinkin'. Cows is got prutty eyes, an' lashes so long you could plat 'em. So's Miss 'Ginia. An' a cow's breath smells better'n anything an' — " but whether Blanche in her enthusiasm intended to intimate that Mrs. Meade shared the last attribute in common with the cow remains to be divulged, for at that moment the new governess appeared in the door with young Master Henry Marshall Meade IV crowing in her arms.

In the kitchen Aunt Maria still rattled the pots and pans irritably, and rumbled forth her reiteration of:

"No hidin' place down here."

Mary paused, holding the baby close in her arms. A pretty picture she made. Uncle Cy agreed with Blanche that she looked like an angel, or maybe the picture of a lady that hung in the drawing room — the one with a light shining behind her head and a baby in her arms.

He stopped his vigorous rubbing of the silver and gazed at her with the expression in his kind eyes of an old house dog who had decided to admit a newcomer into the family circle. If he had possessed a caudle appendage he would have wagged it. As it was, he could only bow his grizzled, woolly head and spread out his arms as he stepped back with a gesture of fealty. His "Mistis! Mistis!" meant that he was Mary's to command.

Aunt Maria's song boomed forth. In it she had declared in stanza after stanza that there was no hiding place anywhere, naming every object in her vocabulary where one might possibly hope to find a hiding place. Trees, rivers, mountains, caves, houses, churches, lodges, bushes, etc. She had arrived at the rock as Mary stood in the door between the dining room and butler's pantry.

"I went to the rock to hide my face—
The rock cried out: 'No hidin' place,
No hidin' place down here!'"

"She's pretty nigh done now, Miss Mary," Blanche whispered. "When she gits to the rock she most times gives out 'les she's extra aggrafied."

In spite of the racket Aunt Maria was making in the kitchen she seemed to divine that the interloper was approaching. From the stove by which she was standing she could see old Cy backing off with arms outspread. She was conscious that Blanche was speaking in a conciliatory tone, the one she used in addressing white folks.

"Humph!" said Aunt Maria, slamming down a frying pan so that the stew pans and kettles shook with fright, "Humph!" and then she took up her refrain where she had left off and with a new meaning in her voice shouted forth:

"I went to the kitchen to hide my face—
The kitchen cried out: 'No hidin' place,
No hidin' place down here!'"

Mary laughed. The clear note soared above the rattle of pan and pot and dominated Aunt Maria's "No hidin' place," which she was repeating with meaning emphasis. Mary laughed and laughed again. The baby jumped and gurgled with delight and crowed aloud. There was sudden quiet in the kitchen. The cooking utensils no longer trembled. The hymn was finished. Aunt Maria softly padded to the door

between the kitchen and butler's pantry, where she stood looking at the offensive white help who had come to interrupt the peace of below stairs. That laugh! The lilt of it, the fun of it, the sadness of it, had searched out the old woman's soul. She wanted to hear it again. It was as she had heard Blanche telling Uncle Cy — like a mocking bird sitting on a swinging limb. She looked long and hard at the young girl — noted her waving black hair and the blue, blue eyes under sweetly arched brows, and caught in them a wistful gleam which explained the note of ineffable sadness that had crept into the laughter.

The sullen humor lifted from her soul, the humor that had held her in its grasp ever since Mrs. Meade had told her that the new nurse was not a real nurse at all but a governess who was to be called Miss Mary and was to have her meals separate from both white and colored servants. She had pictured quite a different person. This sweet young thing, whose slim figure was bending under the weight of the plump baby, was one to be cherished and protected and, above all, to be fed. There was something about her that reminded the old woman of a little girl she had nursed in days gone by, a frail child who had died before she

reached her teens. She had loved her more than she had ever loved any human creature, even more than her own children. To be sure, that child had golden hair and brown eyes, but the soul that looked from those brown eyes was akin to the one that shone from the blue ones before her. Aunt Maria did not know the word "gallant," but that would have expressed what she had in her mind. Mary's was a gallant soul. The old woman bobbed an obeisance.

"Glad ter meet you, Miss Mary. Us alls air a gonter do all we kin ter make things easy fer you. I reckon you air kinder peckish by this time an' I kin knock up a tasty lunch fer you in no time. You, Blanche, git a move on you an' set a place fer Miss Mary in the dining room. This here butler's pantry ain't no place fer a lady ter eat in, what with sinks an' sich. Now stir yo' stumps, gal."

Blanche grinned delightedly. Uncle Cy nodded his head in approval of Sis Maria's change of heart. Again Aunt Maria rattled pots and pans, but this time there was a cheerful and harmonious clink to them as she knocked up the tasty luncheon.

"Another friend," thought Mary, and somehow she felt very sure of Aunt Maria.

CHAPTER XIII

Mary was astonished to find how easy it was to care for a healthy young child with regular habits. Regularity, as far as other people were concerned, was one of the things Mrs. Henry Marshall Meade III insisted upon, and regular the baby was from the moment it came into the world. Even before it arrived it might have been said to be regular, for the expectant mother had put herself in the hands of specialists whose creed — regularity — was a religion. Henry IV slept a prescribed number of hours, awakened for nourishment, crowed a little, gurgled a little, smiled happily and sleepily and was off again to Shut Eye Town. Under Aunt Maria's tuition Mary soon learned the mysteries of the wardrobe and mastered the intricacies of tape and pin. The baby's bath in the morning was a frolic for all concerned. After several demonstrations by Aunt Maria, the new nurse knew as well as the teacher how to hold the squirming, kicking, crowing youngster.

"I'll give it to you, Miss Mary, you is some baby han'ler. I've seen mothers of leben an' mo' that couldn't handle a baby the way you kin. Of co'se the true tes' is puttin' on a belly ban', but new time folks don't use no belly ban's on babies. I 'member the fust babies I ever nussed we uster sew the belly ban' on em. In those days there wa'nt no little saftest pins, an' puttin' on a belly ban' wa' a ticklish business."

"Why did the poor kiddies have to wear them?" asked Mary, who liked nothing better than listening to the talk of her colored friends.

"To keep they insides inside. Babies mus' be made diffunt these days. In ol' times if babies didn't wear belly ban's they wa' liable ter bus' open. This here baby ain't never had on one ter my certain knowledge, an' strange ter say he ain't bus'ed open yet. It mus' be the babies air made diffunt. I know his paw would a split open if he hadn't er been bandaged up. I 'member how Mammy Loo, who was ol' Missy's reg'lar lyin' in nuss, uster put it on as tight as a puddin' bag full er puddin' an' then she tol' his maw that if the baby hollered too much he wa' liable ter bus' wide open. Ol' Miss wa' scairt ter death ter let him holler, an' if he so much as chirped she'd make us all

pick him up out er his crib. He got so spiled he wouldn't sleep less somebody helt him. I 'member one time I wa' kinder lookin' after him whilst Mammy Loo went to meetin' an' ev'y time I put him down he waked up an' hollered. So I helt him an' helt him, til by'nby I got so sleepy I drapped off an' when I come to I wa' lyin' on the flo' with the baby on top er me. Both of us done slep' through the night lyin' on the flo'. I come to the inclusion then an' thar that I wa'nt gonter be no reg'lar baby nuss. I kep' a thinkin' how it would a been if I'd been on top er the baby stid er the baby on top er me. I likes babies an' I ain't mindin' keepin' keer er them off'n on, but not reg'lar. I ain't had no heart ter nuss anyhow sinct my little lamb died. That's the little gal chil' I tol' you about."

"Yes, I remember," said Mary.

"I says gimme cookin' with no stint in 'gredients, that is fer reg'lar. When you cooks you plans an' fixes an' when you are through you are through, but nusses air a nussin' from day ter night an' from night back ter day. If the chilluns don't love the mammy nuss the mothers are s'picious, an' if they do love 'em too hard the mothers are jealous. I 'member 'bout my lamb. One time a gemman what wa' callin'

asked her who she loved bes' in the world an' she up an' said 'Aunt Maria an' God' an' do you know her maw got ter cryin' 'cause she wa' so jealous er me, not ter mention our Maker. I tell you now, Miss Mary, Miss Ferginia ain't diffunt from the res'. She's glad enough ter git shet er the trouble of the baby but she's gonter git peeved if he turns out a lovin' you an' God beter'n he does her."

Mary had been with the Henry Marshall Meades long enough to feel quite at home. She possessed that rare power of adapting herself to her surroundings; acquired, no doubt, from having been forced to spend much of her girlhood in the houses of other people. Always on the branch, never in a nest of her own. Her position in the household was a peculiar one. The colored servants respected and loved her. Mike, the Irish chauffeur, was her slave from the very first. The baby held out his arms to her whenever he was awake. Mr. Meade was evidently puzzled by the new governess — puzzled and attracted. Having a preconceived notion that she was a milkmaid type, he had found some difficulty in adjusting his mind to this charming, slim girl whose poise and manner evinced good breeding. He, too, was impressed by a certain gallant bearing always present, whether she was

wheeling the baby down Monument Avenue or receiving orders from the mistress concerning her charge. Her head was always up and shoulders squared — and then her laugh! He found himself listening for that laugh. Sometimes in the early morning he heard it in the nursery. He would pause in the business of adjusting collars and stand quite still until his wife would chide him with: "Henry, do hurry! Aunt Maria hates to wait on you for breakfast. I know very well what you are thinking about — percent or interest or discounts or something. I can catch the gleam in your eye. I must say you might forget business once in a while for baby and me."

And he would quickly button his collar, though he could not help wondering what the governess was laughing about and wishing Virginia would keep still and let him hear the music.

The Meades had been married six years, but Richmond, when there was nothing else to discuss, still wondered why Henry had done it. Sometimes Henry wondered a little himself, not that he did not love the pretty woman quite as much as he had the pretty girl, but there were moments when he faced the truth that the mother of his somewhat belated baby had not developed

as, in his early infatuation, he had hoped she would. However, he had made his marriage bed and faithfully lay on it. One thing: Virginia was as pretty as ever, and she graced his house and automobiles and spent his money quite as intelligently as could have a wittier person. As for character, his wife was all character; if planning her life and putting those plans into execution with an expedition and efficiency that Herbert Hoover himself might emulate, meant character. She made up her mind what she wanted and then acquired it. She always did what she wanted to do and never did what she did not want to do. She had an almost devilish ingenuity in accomplishing this in such a manner that any blame that might ensue could not fall on her. For instance, she had determined before she married Henry that his sister Peachey Meade was not to live with them. By clever manipulation and juggling of facts, she had made it seem that Peachey herself had come to the conclusion that she did not want to make her home with her brother and his wife.

Peachey, who was only eighteen at the time, had no other thought than to continue to live with her brother — who was much older than she and had in a measure taken the place of mother and father to his beloved little sister. However,

when she realized how the new sister-in-law felt about it, she quite readily fell into the trap and was quick to be the first to demand emancipation and independence for herself.

College was the first step toward this freedom. Holidays were spent in visits to the many relations, with a bare two weeks in her brother's home, although a room in the third story was kept in readiness for her, and this always was spoken of by her sister-in-law as "Peachey's room." Indeed, that lady took great credit to herself for this charmingly dainty apartment, with its pretty hangings matching the wall paper, its graceful ivory tinted furniture and luxurious tiled bath. Mrs. Meade ignored the fact that Peachey never occupied this room more than two weeks a year, and fooled herself into believing that it was her sister-in-law's fault that she did not spend her entire time with the brother who quite frankly adored her. Transient guests, who Mrs. Meade feared might become too permanent, such as country cousins and the like, were put in this room. She had a set phrase which she always used in this connection.

"I am putting you in Peachey's room. She is not with us at present but we are rather expecting her any day. Oh, yes, she knows her room is ready for her at all times. Of course

sometimes it is inconvenient to keep this apartment set aside for her, as our house is not really so very large; but then, she is Henry's only sister and I feel enough cannot be done for the dear girl. If we had a cottage of only three rooms I should feel that one of those rooms must be Peachey's room."

Naturally, the country cousin, or whoever was occupying the room, would feel that too long a stay was hardly desirable in that Peachey might pounce upon the household at any moment and her room must be ready. In fooling herself concerning her sister-in-law, Mrs. Meade also succeeded in fooling many other persons. Those who did not know the girl felt she must be rather queer, at least peculiar, and perhaps a bit stuck up and difficult to handle.

It was rather disquieting that now, after four years at college and two years abroad, the little sister-in-law had come back to Richmond with the avowed intention of setting up bachelor maid quarters for the next year or more. Rumor was that she was engaged to Price Winston, a clever attaché of the American Embassy at the Court of St. James. But she had not confided in her brother's wife. Whether she had confided in Henry it was impossible to divine. When approached in the matter he had only grunted

out a "Well, well! Is that so?" and had thus dismissed it.

Of course Henry was all for having his sister come and occupy the room that had been for six years held sacred to her. It was all very well to go to college and travel abroad and visit around among the relations, but when she was in Richmond her place should be in her brother's home. He loved her and missed her and wanted her. She was his own little sister, and until she married she ought to live with him. Beside all this, she had an understanding heart and a sense of humor. It was sometimes a bit tiresome to be always laughing at his wife and never with her. He hoped, almost prayed, that Henry IV would know a joke when he saw it. He wondered if Miss Mary could instill some humor into her charge along with the boasted pure English. The baby kicked and crowed and giggled already, as though he distinguished between jest and earnest, but in a baby that might mean nothing more than a good digestion. At any rate, until the boy grew enough to share his father's jokes, he devoutly wished to have his sister make part of his household.

Whenever he mentioned the subject to his wife she would agree with him that Peachey should come.

"I am sure, Henry, that I have done all I can to make your sister feel at home in your house. Don't I keep a room ready for her year in and year out? I even call it Peachey's room and have the servants understand it is her room. Only last week I had to tell Cousin Lulie Melton that while she was welcome to the room for a day or so that Peachey might be back in Richmond any moment and I felt her room must be ready and waiting for her. Cousin Lulie had come all the way from Bedford to consult a specialist about her eyes, ears, nose and throat, and I know she felt kind of disappointed not to make her headquarters here at our house while she took treatment. But I felt it was my duty to be quite frank with her about Peachey's room. Naturally your own sister must be considered before my mother's first cousin, once removed."

"Once removed is good," grinned Henry. "But I can't see why you didn't put your poor Cousin Lulie in the other guest room. Where is she? Let me send for her. I wouldn't have one of your kin not be welcome in our house for anything."

"Now, Henry, what foolishness! Cousin Lulie is well able to board at the Jefferson while she is under the doctor's care. Besides, she is an awful old bore, with all of her ailments.

I really was afraid Henry Marshall might catch something in his ears, eyes, nose or throat while she was here, not that I believe there is a thing the matter with her, really — nothing but selfish imagination. Thank goodness, however, our boy is not a contagious baby."

"Nevertheless, I should dislike very much for him to be exposed to selfish imagination," Henry solemnly declared. "He might catch it, and without doubt it is the most deadly of all maladies. Speaking of imagination — is Miss Mary getting any results with the kid in the way of English 'as she is spoke?'"

Mrs. Meade looked at her husband coldly. She wished he wouldn't be so foolish. If she ever married again she was determined to pick her husband carefully and be sure he was not a person who tried to be funny. Above all, she would not accept Number Two if he had a sister who laughed at his silly sallies. If Peachey Meade had been without the boasted family sense of humor, she might have been welcome to the pretty ivory tinted furniture, chintz hangings and luxurious tiled bath.

CHAPTER XIV

Peachey Meade was back in Richmond after a prolonged stay in Florida. She had arrived only the night before. Instead of coming to her brother's house, she had gone to a select boarding house where her cousin, Miss Elizabeth Somer, had made her home for twenty years or more. Her excuse was that she had many times promised Cousin Lizzie to visit her and this seemed a good opportunity. She did not say, in making the excuse, that she was not really visiting Cousin Lizzie any more than Cousin Lizzie was visiting Mrs. Leander Peake, who kept the fashionable and select boarding house. It pleased Cousin Lizzie to speak of Peachey as her guest, just as it pleased Mrs. Leander Peake to speak of her boarders as guests, and to forget, as far as possible, that the matter of remuneration was of the greatest importance.

Peachey Meade was blessed with a comfortable income of her own; comfortable in that it allowed her to live as she chose. She chose to

live simply, traveling when the spirit moved her and stopping when the spirit ceased to move. She had had two years of journeying at home and abroad and now she had determined to stop in Richmond for an indefinite period. Rumor was right. Peachey Meade was engaged to Price Winston and that was the reason she had come back to Richmond and also the reason that her stay in her beloved home town was indefinite. She wished to be married in old St. Paul's, with her friends around her and with her brother to give her away. The date for her wedding had not been settled upon. Indeed, the engagement had not yet been announced to anyone but the beloved brother. Price Winston was even then in Washington and expected in Richmond at any hour.

Breakfast was over at Mrs. Leander Peake's, and breakfast at Mrs. Peake's was a real meal. Neither that lady nor her paying guests had any use for what they considered the new-fangled idea of a light matutinal repast. Of course there must be batter-bread and turnovers and cakes or waffles. There was the inevitable salt roe-herring that the inhabitants of certain of the south-eastern states feel must start the day. Then liver and bacon or kidney stew, fried apples, fried potatoes and eggs to order.

Peachey, accustomed to the Continental breakfast of coffee and rolls, must be forcibly fed by the determined Miss Somer, who brooked no disobedience from the young. Now that the ordeal was over, Peachey declared she felt like a Straasburg goose.

"You would have felt more like a goose if you had not eaten your breakfast. What is the use in paying Mrs. Leander Peake the enormous board we do pay her unless we eat her food? I have no patience with waste. It is the one tradition left us here in Virginia, this good, hot, satisfying breakfast, and it is the duty of all of us of gentle blood to hold to that tradition. This foolish traveling abroad is what has spoiled you. Virginia is good enough for Virginians and it is the duty of right-minded Virginians to stay in that state in which it has pleased God to call them."

Miss Elizabeth wound up as though quoting from the Episcopal catechism. Peachey smothered a giggle, something she must often do when in the presence of Cousin Lizzie. It had been the girl's intention to tell Miss Somer of her engagement to Price Winston before that young man should arrive in Richmond, but it was difficult to commence now that she was so full of food and Miss Lizzie so full of contention.

"Er — er — Cousin Lizzie, you remember Price Winston, don't you?"

"Of course I remember him. A very bad boy he was indeed. He belonged to a wicked crowd of youths who called themselves 'The Hoodlums' and used to steal ice cream freezers from the back porches of persons who were giving entertainments. They also made a practice of stealing ash barrels and having great bonfires which they kept up all Christmas Eve until dawn broke on Christmas day. They made night hideous with their howls and no ash barrel was sacred to them. Yes indeed, I remember Price Winston quite well. What about him?"

"Well, he — he — isn't quite as bad as he used to be."

"He might be better and not be good."

Peachey smothered another giggle and began again.

"Cousin Lizzie, you are our nearest relative, Henry's and mine."

"Not at all! You have at least twenty-five cousins on the Henry and Marshall side that are quite as close as I am. I am your nearest Meade and Somer kinswoman, but you have three kinsmen on that branch who are equally close. You have a very bad head for genealogy. Stupid of you. If you had given as much time to

finding out something about your own family as you have wasting time on the study of French and reading foolish modern literature, you would know the difference between first and second cousins, and first cousins, once removed and second cousins once removed. Virginia Wilson, who has very little sense, knows more about her husband's family than you do. Of course she has very little family of her own with which it is necessary to keep up. Speaking of Virginia, did you know she is making a fool of herself in a new and original way? Well, she is! She has got a white nurse for her baby. Absurd! As though a negro mammy were not good enough for this child!"

"Have you seen the nurse?" asked Peachey. "Virginia phoned me about her last night. I think she might be a good thing for poor Virginia, who has had a time with housemaids and nurses. Of course Uncle Cy and Aunt Maria are fixtures and they are always objecting to the younger servants. Virginia tells me she has a girl from the country now, one of Aunt Maria's nieces, that she is trying to train. She says the new English girl gets along splendidly with the colored servants, also with the chauffeur. Did you say you had seen her?"

"I did not say. You ask a question and then

rattle along so I have no time to answer it. A very bad habit in the young, asking questions and rattling. When you ask a question you should pause for a reply. One forgets what the question is when you pour forth a stream of conversation not relative to it."

"Sorry!" said Peachey, trying not to laugh.

"There you are, being ultra modern. Saying sorry is no way to beg one's pardon. I don't know what the world is coming to when young persons don't even know the proper form of apology."

"All right, Cousin Lizzie! Please excuse me and I humbly beg your pardon, although just what for I am not quite sure. Perhaps you can remember."

Miss Somer could not recall just in what way her young cousin had offended, so she snorted noisily while Peachey smiled behind the *Times-Dispatch*.

"Have you, Cousin Lizzie?"

"Have I what?"

"Seen Virginia's English nursery governess?"

"No! What is more I have no desire to see her. Nursery governess indeed! A child should have a negro mammy until it is four years old and then a younger negro nurse until it is seven

and then, if it is a male child, it should be sent to school. If it is a female, then a governess is quite appropriate. In my youth every family of any means employed a governess. As a rule the governess was a poor relation who had to be supported anyhow. Since she already belonged to the family, she was taken in as a member of the family. I understand that Virginia says this English girl is quite a lady, and yet she is not allowed to eat with the family. Of course she is not quite a lady or she would not be willing to occupy this menial position."

"Perhaps it is her poverty and not her will that consents," suggested Peachey.

"Nonsense! If a person is a lady she wouldn't let Virginia Wilson make her eat in the kitchen. It is an easy matter to quell Virginia Wilson if one sets about it."

"Perhaps the poor girl has never 'set about it.' Maybe she prefers eating in the kitchen. I am sure I'd much rather do it than force myself where I wasn't wanted. I'd rather like eating in Aunt Maria's kitchen. I'm sure I used to like it when I was a little girl and she would lift batty cakes right off the stove on to my plate."

"Plebian tastes!"

And thus ended Peachey Meade's interview

with Cousin Lizzie. The girl could not bring herself to discuss her engagement with one who was so combative. It amused her that her old relation should be so cantankerous, but at the same time it irritated her to be treated like a child. She had been her own mistress for so many years, and led such an independent existence, that Miss Somer's autocratic mandates concerning her speech and actions forced her to the conclusion that she would cut short her visit to Mrs. Leander Peake's select and fashionable boarding house.

CHAPTER XV

Spring in the air! Monroe Park, that Garden of Eden for Richmond babies and nurses, was at its loveliest. Beds of iris, Richmond's own flower, were resplendent with purple and yellow. The fountain leapt high in the air, as though entering into the play of the children who ran around its circular basin. The benches were rapidly filling with colored nurses, old and young.

Two mammies sought the shade of a linden tree, where stood a bench with a pleasantly slanting back. They sat down ostentatiously, spreading out their starched purple calico dresses as an intimation to other nurses that the seat was full. They drew close the baby carriages in which their charges lay and gently shook them as they talked.

"How is yer, Sis Celie? This here Spring wedder done foun' out my weakness. My jints is pow'ful stiff wi' the rheumatiz."

"Same here, Sis Sukey! My baby done had me out'n the baid mo'n half the night. Missus

say she cuttin' teef, but it looks mo' ter me lak the teef air cuttin' the baby." They both laughed happily with deep, pleasant chuckles.

"Look yonder comin'," said Aunt Sukey as Mary entered the park, slowly pushing the carriage in which lay Henry Marshall Meade IV. "Look yonder, Sis Celie! That's the new white nuss what Miss 'Ginia Wilson done hired. You know Miss 'Ginia Wilson, the one what married Marse Henry Meade? They do say she wa' pow'ful uplifted by the matermony she done committed. Co'se the Wilsons is newer folks than the Marshalls an' Henrys an' Meades."

"How come she tuck a notion fer a white nuss?" asked Aunt Celie. "Ain't a black mammy been good enough fer all the Henrys an' Marshalls an' Meades what air gone befo'?"

"Sho, sho! But Miss 'Ginia's bent on the lates' style in ev'ything. She don't call this here nuss a plain nuss. No'm, she call her a gubbernuss — English gubbernuss. Gawd knows what she's gonter gubber. The baby ain't much mo'n bawn."

"Lawd, Lawd, sister, this here worl's a gittin' too fas' fer you'n me. Didn't I hear a young mother say that she didn't believe in no kind of spankin's fer chilluns but pre-natal ones? The po' little untried lamb meant jes' a takin'

of herself ter task befo' the baby wa' bawn."

The old women rocked with laughter, emitting deep chuckles the while. As Mary approached they drew their bandanna kerchiefed heads close together and whispered.

"Somehow, this here white gubbernuss 'minds me er quality. She's got a high steppin' look ter her that po' white folks can't git," said Aunt Sukey.

"Sho she is! Whar'd you say Marse Henry Meade's wife done pick her up?"

"I hear tell the Worthy Mother down at the XYWZ phomed up to Miss 'Ginia that there wa' a English gubbernuss there wid a letter er 'medation from the noblebility, an' Miss 'Ginia wa' so scairt that one of the smart-Aleck set what she goes with would git ahaid of her that she had her lim'zine hitched up in the dead er night an' had the girl fotched up ter Marse Henry's."

Mary seated herself on a near-by bench. The old colored women looked admiringly at her and with voices raised to an audible whisper, continued:

"She sho is pretty."

"Ain't it the truf?"

"Good morning — both of you," said Mary, smiling her appreciation of the compliment. "I

hope your babies are well. Mine sleeps all the time."

"The Henrys an' Marshalls an' Meades is all good sleepers," said Aunt Celia. "I have nussed po'tions of all of them at one time or anudder an' I knows."

"When does a baby get so it can sit up and take notice?" asked Mary.

The old women interchanged sly nudges and winks. Aunt Sukey spoke:

"You call yo'self nussin' an' arsk sech a question? Why bless yo' sweet life, honey, they's never no tellin'. Some babies is bawn settin' up an' takin' notice, an' some lives ter be mos' a hun'erd an' dies 'thout ever takin' notice."

Mary laughed happily. The old women smiled at the clear note of merriment and nodded knowingly at each other.

"Umhum! What'd I tell you?" said one in a low tone.

"Ain't it the truf? That there keerless laugh shows she ain't no po' white any mo'n a mockin' bird is po' white."

"Another question, please — if you will not think I am too ignorant — why do both of you jiggle your prams all the time? Is that what nurses are supposed to do?"

"Is prams buggies?" asked Aunt Sukey.

"Oh, yes, I meant the baby carriages," Mary explained quickly.

"We jes' shakes 'em to keep 'em quiet."

"But isn't your baby asleep?"

"Yassum, sleep so long as you keep it a movin', but you jes' lemme stop an' you'll hear from her." She ceased the jiggling of the carriage to illustrate and the baby immediately began to cry fretfully. "Umhum! What'd I tell yer?" She began to shake the carriage and to pat the infant gently and in a rich deep voice, low and soothing, sang:

"Mammy went away — she tol' me ter stay,
An' tek good keer er the baby,
She tol' me ter stay, an' sing dis away:
Oh, go ter sleepy, little baby!

Oh, go ter sleep! sleepy little ba —
Oh, go ter sleep little baby,
Kase when you wake, you'll git some cake,
An' ride a little white horsey!

Aunt Celia took up the refrain in a high quaver that blended perfectly with Aunt Sukey's contralto, and the old women walked up and down near Mary, shaking the carriages gently and crooning softly.

"We'll stop up the cracks an' sew up the seams;
The Booger Man never shall ketch you!
Oh, go ter sleep an' dream sweet dreams —
The Booger Man never shall ketch you!

"Well, Henry Marshall Meade the Fourth, it's a good thing for my education, and incidentally yours, that you do not have to be shaken constantly," laughed Mary as she peeped lovingly at her charge and patted the heavily embroidered carriage robe covering the sleeping infant. Then she opened a book and commenced to read. Reading in the park had become as much a habit with the nursery governess as sleeping in the park was with the Meade baby. Mr. Meade's library was a never ending delight to the girl. Books kept her from thinking about herself — that is, her past self. It was all right to think about her present self. She was a model nurse, living in a highly respectable home on Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia. Her life consisted in caring for a healthy baby with regular habits; eating marvelously good food — sometimes at a side table in the pantry, sometimes in the dining room when the family were not at home, sometimes in the pleasant kitchen where she could listen to the old cook's wisdom as she dexterously handled her culinary

implements; and sleeping the sleep of the healthily tired in her little room which, thanks to Blanche, boasted a "curting" and a "cyarpet." Thanks to Mike, the little room also boasted a reading lamp. The kindly chauffeur had manipulated the electric wires so that the light hung low over the head of her bed. When the baby was settled for the night and was good for nine hours of sleep, Mary would go to her little room and read in bed until far in the night.

She saw little of her employers. Every morning Mrs. Meade had her report to her and went through the formality of giving orders for the day. Mary knew she was giving satisfaction from the telephone conversations she inadvertently overheard.

"Perfect, my dear, perfect! So regular, so quiet and well mannered, anyone could tell she has been only in the best homes. And have you seen her on the street with the baby? Her costume is so picturesque — long blue cape and tight blue bonnet, you know, with white strings. Oh yes, her recommendation was from the nobility — a Lady Mary Dale — such charming note paper with an embossed crest!"

Mary occasionally passed Mr. Meade in the halls or in the library when she was in search of a book. He it was who had given her access

to his library. Mrs. Meade, being no reader herself, had never thought of books as being necessary to anyone, certainly not to an English nursery governess. But Henry Meade considered reading as necessary as eating or sleeping, and when he wished to show anyone an especial favor, he offered the freedom of his library.

What a blessing this library was to the governess! There were even more books here than in the old book room remembered in her dreams. Henry Meade was a book lover and he came of a family of book lovers. He had inherited books, he bought books, and what time he could spare from his various business ventures was spent among his books. The library was the one room in the house that did not belong to his wife. It was his, a typical man's room, and bore the imprint of his taste and the taste of the Henry Meades who had gone before him. Indeed, except for the modern publications, it might have been the library of either his father or grandfather. If Mrs. Meade had had her way with this room as she did with everything else, she would have had it papered with much lighter paper and the walnut wood work would have been enameled ivory white; the dark floor would have been made lighter and the frames on the Sully paintings and St. Memin drawings of an-

cestors would have been regilded. It worried and irritated the lady that there should be so dingy a spot in her well ordered house. Henry Meade could call it tone if he chose, but she called it downright dinginess.

Mary was thankful that the library escaped Mrs. Meade's brightening and lightening mania. It had a calm, sweet, old world atmosphere about it that appealed to her. Sometimes, when the baby was asleep and the master and mistress safely off for the evening, she would switch on the reading lamp, curl up in a great leather chair and read until she heard the latch key in the lock. Then she would fly up the back stairs to her room. There was no reason for flying, for Mr. Meade had told her to make herself at home in the library, but fly she always did, like a culprit fay. It was not so much flying from Mr. Meade as Mrs. Meade. She was tempted at times not to fly at all from Mr. Meade, but to stay and talk with him. She was sure she would like him. She must like a man who owned such a charming library and had a certain kind of twinkle in his eye. She wanted to talk about the books she was reading. In truth, she was bubbling over with the desire to discuss those books with an intelligent person. She felt indeed that "Reading maketh a full man."

The hardest part of the whole mixed up state of her life was that she had no intellectual companionship. Amusing companionship, yes, in the dear old colored servants, the adoring Blanche and the palapably admiring Mike; wholesome and pleasant companionship when she managed on rare occasions to see Miss Effie Sharp Burton. Those occasions were rare, owing to the fact that Mrs. Meade had a cunning almost devilish in regard to the nurse's afternoon off. There was always some excellent reason for postponing the holiday, and Mary good-naturedly allowed herself to be imposed upon. As for an evening off, it was almost unheard of. Mrs. Meade had the attitude of protecting the young English girl and there was no protection like allowing her to stay at home in a pleasantly luxurious house, incidentally minding a sleeping baby.

It was amusing to note what an easy job it was in the mind of Mrs. Meade for Miss Mary to mind the baby, but what a stupendous undertaking it was when she must look after her own offspring. On those rare occasions she was a real martyr and the wires were kept hot informing her friends what a devoted mother she was.

"Of course I might have Blanche look after

baby, but Blanche is so foolish and you know how particular I am about Henry Marshall Meade the Fourth. I could not trust him with a raw, untrained nurse. I would have Aunt Maria take care of him but she is such an old grouch when she has to cook and nurse too. I am trying to get her to teach Blanche how to cook so when it is necessary Aunt Maria can nurse and Blanche can cook. But Henry says a dinner ruined is more important than spoiling a baby a bit. He says that the ruined dinner is so final. He says he has known very good men develop from bad babies but a badly cooked dinner is beyond redemption. You know how Henry goes on. Indeed, I wish he wouldn't be so silly. All of the Meades talk that way, at least Henry and his sister do. But I am so glad to be allowed to see something of baby. Of course it ties me down a lot, this thing of letting the nurse go for a whole afternoon. What she does with her time I cannot see. Goodness knows a baby is the easiest thing on earth to take care of. He is no trouble at all. I should think it would be recreation enough for her to wheel him to the park and sit there reading and sewing. She certainly has an easy job. Yes, I'll be fagged to death by evening. Nursing wears me to a frazzle."

Thus she would rattle on. Mary could not but hear her ravings and her well earned holiday would lose its zest.

And so the days went on. The baby grew, sleeping and eating, and now a tooth was imminent. Mary's contours were becoming more rounded and the color on her soft cheek heralded a return of the good health that had been so stressed in the letter of recommendation.

There was much talk in the Meade household on the subject of Miss Peachey Meade's return to Richmond. The servants were devoted to her and spoke of her in glowing terms. Long conversations were carried on over the telephone by her sister-in-law. In them the blame was adroitly put upon Peachey and her peculiar disposition because she did not make her home with her only brother.

"Her room here is always ready and waiting for her. No, it is not always convenient to keep a room ready and waiting, but you see Peachey is Henry's sister. Of course I don't feel that a room must be set aside for any of *my* relations — indeed, I often have to make them cut short their visits with me because of the possibility of Peachey's coming home. When she came home from abroad we thought of course she would stay with us.

"Yes indeed, I had the curtains all done up and bought a darling hooked rug, one I had been longing for. They are all the rage now. Of course when she would not stay but a few days and rushed off to Florida with the Spencers I did not leave the rug in her room. It really looks wonderful in my own. The colors harmonize much better with my draperies than with the ones in Peachey's room — but that is neither here nor there. Yes, my dear, she is back in Richmond and visiting Miss Elizabeth Somer, Cousin Lizzie, you know, at Mrs. Leander Peake's. So foolish of her! I can't see why she should go there just when Price Winston is home on leave. Everybody knows a boarding house is no place in which to bring a young man to the point of proposing. They simply have no place where Peachey can receive guests. The parlor is as public as a park. Foolish of Peachey, yes! In this day and generation it isn't so easy to bring a man to the point of popping the question. Of course Peachey is young yet, but not so young that she can afford to be careless with a real chance like Price Winston."

The nursery governess overheard enough to make her curious to see this Peachey. She was more inclined to accept the judgment of the servants than of the mistress as to the young

person's disposition and peculiarities. The name Price Winston was familiar to her but she could not remember where she had heard it before. Miss Meade had called on her sister-in-law several times since she returned from Florida, but Mary had always been out with her charge. The name Peachey sounded pleasant and wholesome. She had seen it on the fly leaf of many of the books in Mr. Meade's library: Peachey Marshall Meade, written in a firm, rather boyish hand. The sister evidently shared the brother's bookish taste. No doubt before Virginia Wilson had come into the family, Henry and Peachey had read and talked and joked together in the pleasant library. Now Peachey was on the branch, as it were, and her books must have an abiding place on her brother's shelves.

One evening Mary found a little volume of John Keats tucked behind two great stupid tomes, an English edition like the one she had loved in the dear book room that she now remembered as a dream. *To Peachey from Price* — was written on the fly leaf in small, clean, flowing chirography and dated many years ago. So the affair was of long standing! It was an intimate little book, marked and lined and with an occasional marginal note in the same clean masculine hand. It opened naturally at the Ode

to a Nightingale, and Mary read and, like Ruth, she wept, although there was no song of the immortal bird to remind her of home as it had Ruth.

"Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn."

Mary wept and then she laughed — laughed aloud in the quiet library. It was a marginal note that had made her laugh.

So engrossed in her thoughts, her tears and her laughter, she did not hear the opening and shutting of the front door. It was Mr. Meade. As usual he came to the library, relieved to know that his wife would not be home for some time as she was playing bridge with an excitement eating crowd who always played late. He was sure of an uninterrupted hour of reading. He paused a moment at the open door. An unmistakable sob and then a bubble of laughter!

Henry Meade already liked and admired the

English Mary his wife had chosen to care for their baby. He respected her, too, but his admiration and respect were increased a hundred fold when the girl, with the poise of a princess, uncurled herself and sat up, wiped her eyes, blew her nose and laughed again. She didn't say: "Pardon my intrusion!" or: "You must think I am a foolish girl!" or make any other bromidic remark — she merely laughed and held out to him the little volume of Keats, opened at the Ode To a Nightingale.

"Isn't this marginal note amusing?"

He read the annotation aloud:

"'Wouldn't "Alien Corn" be an intriguing title for a novel? Too suggestive of the Department of Agriculture, think you, or perhaps the Prohibition Movement?'"

Henry Meade laughed, too. "That's Price Winston — a fine fellow with a nice humor. He is a great one for marginal notes. All right if he does it on his own books, but I must say I don't fancy it on mine. However, this volume belongs to my sister Peachey. Have you met my sister yet? You'd like her a lot."

"No, not yet! I am sure she is charming. Please let me tell you, Mr. Meade, how much I am enjoying your books. I wish you would recommend a history of the United States for

me to study. You see, I am very ignorant and must coach myself to be in readiness for the baby. He is cutting a tooth now and it will not be long before I shall have to begin to teach him of George Washington and — and — but really I don't know who the others are, at least not many of them. If I study diligently, however, I may qualify in time."

Her tone was light and arch but absolutely lacking in coyness. Henry Meade found John Fiske's History of the United States for her. She tucked it under her arm together with the volume of Keats and with a "Thank you!" and "Good night!" was gone.

Henry Marshall Meade sat late over his cigar, long after his wife had come home triumphantly bearing the prize won at the bridge party. He pretended he had some work to do and, after duly admiring the bridge prize, persuaded her to go on up to bed. The fact that Virginia was constantly winning prizes at bridge, confirmed her husband in his opinion that card sense was a gift not always vouchsafed the intellectual.

His thoughts as he smoked were of the nursery governess who could cry and laugh in the same breath and blow her nose and uncurl herself from a leather chair on being discovered by the master of the house and never lose one

whit of ease and dignity. He marveled at her ease and grace.

"And those lines had made her weep, poor little thing! I wonder why she is here. Why she ever left England.

"The self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home
She stood in tears amid the alien corn."

"Poor kid, she is surely 'amid the alien corn' in this household. I think I'll put Peachey on to helping her a bit. She must need intellectual companionship. I'm glad she likes my books and I wish I could do something to help her — but Virginia wouldn't stand for my playing Naomi to her Ruth. Virginia would be sure to make out I was trying to pose as Boaz."

CHAPTER XVI

"Excuse me, Miss, for interrupting you, but the Missus has sent the baby's milk."

It was that morning in spring when Mary had made the acquaintance of Aunt Celia and Aunt Sukey and they had finally gone off wheeling their baby carriages, singing the sweet old Negro melody. Mary had lost herself first in the little blue volume of Keats and later in the history lent her by Mr. Meade. The baby still slept.

"Excuse me, Miss!"

Mary looked up. It was Mike, humbly holding out a baby's bottle. Mike, the proud chauffeur, had demurred over being milk boy during the regime of the likely colored girl, Miss Mary's predecessor, but now he eagerly sought the privilege of bringing the milk bottle to Monroe Park for the fore-noon feeding of Master Henry Marshall Meade IV.

"Oh, thank you so much, Mike. Tell me, do you know anything about babies?"

"Yes, Miss, all there is to know, I'm think-

ing. Some men are born babies; some acquire babies; and some have babies thrust upon them. Now, I've done all of these things."

"Oh, Mike!"

"Sure, and wasn't I born a baby?"

"Yes!"

"And didn't I acquire babies by matrimony?"

"Mike, are you married?"

"Naw, not on your life! 'Twas me father married the black Irish widder with six. And for the last — death thrust them upon me."

"Your father died?"

"No, the black Irish widow," said Mike, disgust depicted on his pleasant freckled face. "Now it takes all the grand chauffeur wages to keep the wolf from the door. My old man was never much of a provider. But why did you want me to be telling you what I knew about babies?"

"Poor Mike, I am sorry for you, but it is good to be working for something and I am sure the children love you. This is what I want to ask you: the baby is asleep and it is time for his feeding — should I awaken him?"

"Shhh! Never! It is bad luck and bad business to wake the little shavers."

"How can I keep his milk warm so long?"

"Sit on it, Miss, sit on it! I have seen the black Irish widow do it many a time."

Mary laughed so heartily at the suggestion that the baby stirred, opened his eyes and cried.

"Here my pet, here is your luncheon," said Mary, leaning over the baby, who immediately turned his tears into gurgling laughter as he clutched the proffered bottle. "Isn't he a little greedy, though? Oh, Mike, I do love this little creature!"

"Sure you do — but tell me, Miss Mary, isn't this your afternoon off?"

"Perhaps it is, I really don't pay very much attention to my afternoon off," answered Mary indifferently.

"Well, *I* remember, and I'll tell you this — if *you* forget, the Missus won't be the one to be after reminding you. The Missus is booked for a card party this afternoon and nothing would please her more than have you keep on forgetting. She is afraid of the cook, and that's the truth, and if she goes out the cook will have to keep care of the kid. Mr. Meade has put his foot down on the subject of trusting the house girl with his son and heir. I heard him handing it out to the Missus not so long ago, just after that time Blanche turned on the gas oven and forgot to light it. And now, Miss Mary,

I'm wondering if whilst the Missus is at the card party if there is any reason why we shouldn't take in the movies, you and me. Cinema, I believe you call it."

Mary gasped and stood up. She held her pretty head very high and her sensitive nostrils quivered.

"I don't understand you." Her tone was cold and dignified. Could it be that this boy was actually inviting her to go to a picture show with him? It was unbelievable.

"Easy enough to understand," muttered Mike. "I only asked you for a date. No insult intended, but forget it, forget it!"

A gurgle from the baby brought Mary back to solid earth again. She was nothing but a nurse maid in Richmond, Virginia. Why shouldn't a pleasant spoken young chauffeur ask her to go to a motion picture show? She smiled sadly.

"Thank you, Mike, you are very kind to wish to give me an outing, but if you spend money taking me to a cinema I am afraid the six little babies you have had thrust upon you will be deprived of something."

"I know full well I am not fit to be asking the likes of you to go out with me, but just say so, Miss, and don't lay it on the innocent lambs

at home." It was Mike's turn to be dignified and he took it.

"Oh, Mike, don't think that. In London a chauffeur holds himself way above a nurse maid. I shall be glad to go with you."

"Now you are talking!" cried the boy delightedly. "After I take the Missus to the card party I'll run you down in the car. We can get back home before her game is done. So long!" and Mike went whistling down the winding walk of Monroe Park, as proud as an Irish king.

"Mary, Mary, more than usual contrary, what have you done now?" and again the vision of a hateful old woman in England arose in her mind's eye and she laughed at the thought of what that old woman would say at this jaunt planned for the afternoon. Henry Marshall Meade IV merely kicked and crowded as he drained the last drop from his bottle.

Aunt Celia and Aunt Sukey turned at the sound of the lilting laugh.

"What'd I tell you, Sis Celie? Jes' lak a blackbird!"

"Ain't it the truf?"

Mary resumed her reading of the History of the United States and the contented infant played with a sunbeam that danced on the em-

broidered robe which covered his wiggling feet.

The benches were filling. Nurses were there with their charges and several colored couples had established themselves nearby. In the book the Nina and Pinta and Santa Maria were just sighting land when Mary's ear was arrested by a voice she was sure she had hear before. She looked up and beheld Miss Elizabeth Somer approaching, and by her side a charmingly dressed young woman with a piquant, almost pretty face, and an altogether pretty figure. She had fairy feet and hands and her expression was like that of a humorous elf.

Not that Mary could remember Miss Elizabeth Somer's name. She remembered her voice and her thin lipped countenance, also the unmistakable snort with which she voiced her disapproval of the colored couples — nurses and their accompanying swains — who were occupying the benches while their charges dug up the walks with their little spades or played "I spy" around a monument erected to a worthy citizen of Richmond.

"The park is entirely given up to Negroes lately. I certainly intend to write a letter to the paper about it." Miss Somer was always writing a letter to the paper about something.

"But, Cousin Lizzie, they have to be some-

where," said Peachey, who had a tender place in her heart for all girls, black or white, and especially those who had no place in which to entertain their suitors.

"Somewhere is not everywhere," retorted Miss Somer.

There was no use in combating such a self evident truth, so Peachey smiled sweetly and stopped to admire the baby Aunt Celia was wheeling back and forth.

"Well, Celia, I am glad to see you have gone back to work," boomed Miss Somer, as she recognized the old woman.

"I ain't never stopped wuckin', Miss Lizzie. I wa'n't in service fer quite a spell 'cause my daughter wa' a teachin' an' I had ter be home ter cook an' wash fer her. Whilst I wa'n't a wuckin' out I wa' a wuckin' in, an' wuckin' hard at that. Teachers have ter have a passel er clean white waises an' my gal wanted 'em done up same as white folks."

"Well, who is doing them up for her now?" and Miss Elizabeth sniffed disdainfully.

"Lawsamussy, Miss Lizzie," broke in Aunt Sukey, "ain't you done heard tell about Sis Celie's chil'? She done married in lit'rary suckles, that bright skinned gal er Celie's has. She don't have ter teach no mo' an' kin hire

somebody ter cook fer her if she has a mind."

"Literary circles, Aunt Celie! What does your son-in-law write?" asked Peachey.

"Well, he don't 'zactly write nothin' hisse'f, he jes' 'stributes the writin's er others. He's a postman, Miss Peachey."

Another snort from Miss Somer, while Peachey smiled.

"Whose baby is this you are nursing, Sukey?" asked Miss Somer, with the air of a revenue officer.

"Miss John Miller's, Miss Lily White as was. I ain't the reg'lar nuss, but is jes' substitutinizin' fer 'Mandy Jackson whilst she lays up a spell an' gits back some er the insuriance she been payin' out on fer sich a long time 'thout no satisfaction."

"If she is not ill she should be reported for fraudulent dealings," declared the interlocutor.

"Oh, the doctor done seed to it that she's sick enough," chuckled Aunt Sukey.

"Well, you tell Mrs. Miller that I say this baby is entirely too thinly clad for this weather. I am sure she is well wrapped up herself."

"Why, Cousin Lizzie," said Peachey, "I am roasting hot."

"You are not a baby. Babies must be clothed more than grown persons."

"Miss Lizzie," spoke Aunt Sukey, "if you or little Miss Peachey hears tell of a good home in the West End, I wisht you would remember me."

"Indeed I will," said Peachey kindly.

"I have something to discuss with my friends besides servants and am not likely to hear of a suitable place," was Miss Somer's reply.

The mammies wheeled off their babies, evidently much disgruntled and subdued. They no longer hummed their sweet lullaby and showed dejection in every motion. Mary, hoping to escape the notice of Miss Somer, bent low over her book. She had heard the old colored nurses call the young woman Miss Peachey, and she jumped to the conclusion that it must be Miss Peachey Meade. She felt vaguely that she had seen her somewhere before. There was something familiar about her voice and manner, the poise of her head and daintily turned wrist and ankle. She seemed to belong to another world, to the old life left behind before the days of minding a baby.

"Cousin Lizzie," said Peachey, settling herself on a bench nearby, "I am going to stop here and wait for Price Winston. I promised to meet him on the Franklin Street side of the park."

"You'll do nothing of the kind! In my day young women received their callers in their father's parlors." Miss Somer's voice sounded like a sergeant's drilling an awkward squad.

"Well, I haven't a father, and therefore no father's parlor, so the park seems a good compromise."

"I only hope it will not prove compromising. Price Winston is entirely too Frenchified since he became secretary to the Ambassador at the Court of St. James. You are too young to know what is best for you."

"You just reminded me I was no baby," laughed Peachey. "There's a newsboy! I'll get a paper and read until Price comes."

Determination was expressed in every one of Peachey Meade's sixty-two inches. She turned a duck's back on Miss Somer's flow of indignant eloquence and opened her newspaper.

"Very well! Make yourself conspicuous if you want to, I'm through," she rumbled, and turned on an indignant heel. In turning, she suddenly became aware of poor Mary, who had crouched down behind the baby carriage.

"This must be Virginia Wilson's baby," she snapped.

"Mrs. Henry Marshall Meade's, madam," said Mary, with exaggerated respect.

"I am well aware of that, young woman." (Heaven be praised, she did not recognize Mary as the girl from the boarding home!) "I embroidered this carriage robe. That is how I knew whose baby it was. By the way, it has been very badly laundered. Did you do it up?"

"No, madam!"

"If your mistress were not so bent on new fashions, she would employ a good Negro nurse who would wash for the baby. I fancy you do nothing but nurse."

"Nothing!"

"Tell Mrs. Meade that I say this baby is entirely too warm. I'll be bound that like most mothers she is making herself perfectly comfortable and putting all the wraps on the baby."

"Yes, madam!"

"You may also tell Mrs. Meade that I am coming to supper with her to-night. I hope it is supper and not one of those indigestible late dinners. It would be like Virginia Wilson to forget the habit of her forefathers, or at least her husband's forefathers — she had none worth remembering or if she did their habits were not distinguished enough to note. What time does she have supper?"

"Mrs. Meade dines at seven."

"Well, tell her I am coming to supper, not

dinner. What are you reading?" She took Mary's book from her hand without so much as "by your leave." "History of the United States?"

"Yes, madam, I am desirous of preparing myself to instruct Master Henry Marshall Meade the Fourth in the history of his own country, of which I am sadly ignorant. By the time the little boy is old enough to receive instruction, no doubt I shall be fully qualified." Mary spoke in an exaggerated mincing tone as though she had been acting the part of a spinster governess.

Miss Somer looked at her sharply and decided she did not like the nursery governess. She rapidly turned the leaves of the history.

"Ah! Written by a Yankee, I see."

"Certainly! Aren't all Americans Yankees?"

The crowning insult! Lines from Scott that Mary had learned at school came to mind when she beheld Miss Somer holding the history at arm's length.

"Burned Marmion's swarthy cheek like fire,
And shook his very frame for ire."

How was the English girl to know that no insult is equal to the one of calling an unre-

constructed Southerner a Yankee? Miss Somer did not deign to reply to whether or not all Americans were Yankees, but with the most commanding tone she could assume, she said:

"I shall use my influence with my cousin, Mr. Meade, to have such pernicious literature kept out of his house. Where did you get it?"

"From Mr. Meade's library. He recommended it."

Miss Somer returned the offensive book, holding it by the tips of her fingers as though to avoid contamination.

"Well, you could much better employ your time with some sewing while you have nothing to do. A little rolling and whipping on some dainty clothes for the baby would be excellent."

"I am afraid I can't sew much better than I can wash," and Mary laughed her inimitable laugh. Miss Somer narrowed her eyes. She had heard that laugh before but she couldn't remember where. Peachey looked up from her newspaper a moment. The lilt of the laugh stirred memories in her breast, too, but Mary was hidden behind the carriage and Miss Somer's voluminous black draperies.

Miss Somer snorted like a war horse. The idea of a young person laughing because she could not sew.

"Humph! You must have lived with very strange persons if they would put up with such incompetence. It's strange how some people get along."

"Yes, madam, very strange!"

"Well, all I can say is that Virginia Wilson is a fool — but don't forget to tell her that I am coming to supper."

When the irate lady had finally taken herself off, the park seemed to regain the peace and quiet that had been with it before her entrance. Aunt Celia and Aunt Sukey nudged each other and chuckled.

"I tell you, Sis Celie, Miss Lizzie is sumpen. She's got all kinds er blood — maybe that's how come she don't worry herself none to be pleasant, bein' as she ain't been bawn pleasant. The mo' I see of folks the mo' I come to the 'clusion that there are 'ristocrats an' 'ristocrats in this here worl' of sin an' sorrer."

"Ain't it the truf, Sis Sukey?"

They slowly moved off, pushing their baby carriages and singing:

"De ribber run wide, de ribber run deep,
Oh, bye-oh, sweet little baby!
De boat rock slow — shill rock you ter sleep,
Oh, bye-oh, sweet little baby!"

The park gradually emptied itself of nurses and their swains. Peachey Meade and Mary were practically alone, Mary still hidden behind the baby carriage and Peachey engrossed in her newspaper. Mary could not keep from wondering if this was the same Peachey for whom a room was constantly kept in readiness in the home of Henry Marshall Meade III, and occasionally she cast sidelong glances in her direction.

CHAPTER XVII

"Hello, Peaches! You are a nice girl to say 'Meet me in the park,' and then go bury your pretty nose in a newspaper so nobody can find you. How are you, darling?"

Peachey looked up from her paper, where she had apparently come upon an item that excited her. The troubled expression left her face when she gazed in the eyes of the tall, well groomed young man. Such pleasant eyes he had. In fact, everything about Price Winston was pleasant. He hardly looked the part of having been one of the boasted Hoodlums of Richmond whose depredations Miss Somer could not forget.

"Well, darling, how are you?" he repeated.

"Shhh! Price, don't be so obvious. Cousin Lizzie Somer had a fit over my meeting you in the park and if she could hear you talk it would be her death."

"Pity she can't hear me then, the old hearse. Every time I come back to Richmond I find her in deeper mourning, although I don't hear

of any deaths in the immediate connection. Why, please, is she so swathed in black?"

"Don't make fun of her, Price. She is in mourning for the lost cause."

"Oh, excuse me, but don't you think after some fifty-eight or sixty years she might lighten her mourning a little — that is, go in second mourning? A dash of lavender, say?"

"Poor Cousin Lizzie! She has some mighty fine points."

"Yes, I have noticed them — tongue and elbows and — "

"Oh, Price, you silly — but I don't want to quarrel with you about poor old Cousin Lizzie. I am too worried about a nasty scandal in the paper. Have you read it yet?"

"Not very thoroughly. There seemed to be very little doing. I have been busy. That's the reason I am late."

"What is it?"

"A special delivery from an English friend that's got me guessing. But what is up to worry you, dear little girl?"

"Don't talk so loud, Price. The park is not quite empty," glancing at Mary who has crouched more out of sight than before. "It is this horrid thing in the foreign society letter. I always read them now."

"Fitting yourself to be the wife of a diplomat, eh? Honey, you are already fit, as fit as fit."

"Only listen, Price!" Peachy read the bit from the paper in a high, excited voice. She seemed to forget that the park was not empty. No doubt the nurse behind the baby carriage was asleep anyhow, asleep or too stupid to follow the reading. "London society is all agog over the disappearance of Lady Mary, wife of the Honourable Percy Darcy, the younger brother of the Earl of Trice. The vanished lady, before her marriage to the handsome guardsman, was Lady Mary Dale, the Irish belle and beauty who made such a hit in London last year. It is whispered that she has not gone alone, but is accompanied by a certain Captain H———, with whom she was closely associated in private theatricals in the autumn."

"Infamous! Outrageous!" exclaimed Price.

"But the worst is yet to come, if possible," cried Peachey. "Only listen: 'The Dowager of Trice is very indignant over Lady Mary's treatment of her son and declares she will see to it that he institutes proceedings for divorce at once. The Honourable Percy has refused to be interviewed, but the dowager duchess, his mother, has courteously received all reporters'."

"I'll be bound she has!" exclaimed Price. "Poor old Percy's mother is a Tartar for fair."

Peachey continued her reading:

"There is a rather peculiar financial situation in this affair. A large fortune is owned jointly by this couple, provided they remain together. It was left to them, by a relation they had in common, on condition that they marry each other. In deserting her husband, Lady Mary, according to the terms of the will, renounces all claim to the fortune. It now develops that the Honourable Percy refuses to touch a penny of it."

"That's like him! A bully fellow!" cried Price.

"And it is rumored he is on his way to America," continued Peachey.

Henry Marshall Meade IV might well have come to the conclusion that his English nursery governess was employing the methods used by the school of mammies, so violently was his pram jiggled when his Aunt Peachey, all unconscious of his proximity, read aloud that the Honourable Percy Darcy had embarked for America. With a startled ejaculation Mary had sprung to her feet, but had as quickly subsided and sat cowering behind the baby carriage with the history covering her face.

"Goodness, but I'm sorry for that fellow," mused Price.

"But there is not a word of it true," flared the girl. "It couldn't be. Don't you remember you took me to those private theatricals?"

"I should say I do remember."

"It was the very nicest thing that happened to me on my trip. Don't you remember, Price, Lady Mary Darcy had the leading part of the nurse maid and Captain Huntington was the young lord who fell in love with her — that is, he did in the play."

"Yes, and I thought at the time that I was glad it was Lady Mary and not Miss Peachey Meade that the cad was hugging."

"Oh silly, it was just in the play!"

"All the same I was glad and I am gladder than ever now."

"I can't stand anyone believing anything horrid about that lovely Lady Mary. Least of all you, Price. I bet it was all her husband's fault — that is, if anything at all has happened, which of course it hasn't. But if it has, it is his fault."

"Hold on, Peachey! You don't know what a fine fellow Darcy is. He is deserving of the title of Honourable if anyone ever was."

"Oh, of course! Take up for the man and

believe the worst of the woman," and Peachey's tiny foot viciously kicked up the gravel of the walk.

"I never said I believed anything bad of either one of them. Anyhow, whether they are saints or devils, it isn't going to make me have a row with you, sweetheart. What bothers me is that the letter that delayed me this morning is from Darcy. He is on his way to Richmond."

The Yankee history fell to the ground with a thud, but Mary recovered it quickly.

"You mean Sir Percy? Is Lady Mary with him?"

"How can she be, silly? Haven't you just read that she has eloped with Captain Huntington?"

"But that's a lie, silly yourself — I mean what the paper said is a lie. I tell you Lady Mary has as much a right to the title of lady as old Percy has to that of honourable. What does he say in his hateful letter?"

Price laughed.

"There really is no use in your getting so huffy, honey. I think I can see to read the letter better if you let me hold your hand while I am doing it. There, nobody can see us. You might even — no? — all right. I reckon you are right. Well, he says he is thinking of engaging

in some business venture in the States and wishes to consult me before he takes the plunge. These are his words: 'A financial necessity having arisen which makes it necessary for me to earn my living—' Um! It does look as though there were some kind of truth in this scandal."

Peachey jumped up from the park bench.

"Price Winston, if you say that again, I declare I'll never speak to you again."

"Why, Peaches! I can't see that the reputation of Lady Mary Darcy is so much to you. You hardly know her."

"I don't care. I simply adore her. She was so sweet to me that night after the theatricals. We had a nice little talk of almost a minute, and I just know she is good, as well as beautiful. I'd believe her no matter what an old newspaper said. Those foreign scandal letters are dreadful, anyway. She, herself, couldn't make me believe in her wickedness."

Again the pram was jiggled and Mary sprang to her feet. There was a radiant glow on her face.

"Well, I wouldn't go so far as that," said Price. "I fancy any woman could convince me of her wickedness if she set her mind to it."

"Price, could I?"

"No, not you! You could only convince me

of being about the sweetest thing in Richmond."

"Only Richmond?"

"All America!"

"Aha! I knew all the time you had a sweetheart in England," teased the girl.

"What a Peachey!" sighed Price. "But to come back to Lady Mary. I liked her a lot — "

"Liked her! I loved her, the poor, sweet, put-upon thing. Do you remember, Price, dear, how she looked in the pretty nurse's costume standing before Captain Huntington — when he suddenly realizes the nurse is the true aristocrat? I can see her now."

Peachey's eyes widened. She became conscious of the proximity of the English nurse for the first time. Mary's agitation was pathetic. The two girls looked in each other's eyes. The English girl was the first to recover her composure. She put a warning finger on her lips and sank down behind the carriage, her head on her arm.

"Well, honey," said Price, unconscious of the situation, "there is no use in getting so wrought up over it. You are actually pale and trembling. I don't believe Mrs. Leander Peake nourishes you sufficiently. Anyhow you'll be better fed this evening. I've seen to that. You see, I stopped in to see your brother Henry this

morning about this business scheme of Darcy's — at his home I mean. I saw Virginia and was indiscreet enough to mention the fact that a live member of the nobility was on his way to Richmond and now we are booked for dinner this very evening — you and Darcy and I."

"Are you sure I am expected?"

"I should say I am. In fact, you are the party. I told Virginia I was to see you in the park and she commissioned me to invite you. I hope to Heaven Virginia won't see this foreign letter in the paper and connect it up with Darcy."

Peachy laughed hysterically.

"She is sure to, Price. Don't you know Virginia well enough to know she will take particular pains to read this part of the paper so she will have a topic to discuss with her English guest? This foreign society news always appeals to poor Virginia. The point is that your Percy might see it and it would make him feel rather sore, I should think. Is it too late to stop Virginia — I mean her dinner party?"

"Not Virginia! I left her phoning like mad for frying sized chickens. It is to be a typical old-fashioned Virginia supper. My suggestion — supposed to be to please Darcy, but it is really to satisfy my own inner man. When I

come home I can't get enough of this old Virginia cooking. Umm — waffles! I also suggested that she ask a typical old southern lady; the sweet, mellow kind like Mrs. Puss Johnson. Virginia was so grateful to me for my English lion that she readily consented to my suggestions concerning the other guests."

"If you are going to meet that noon train you had better hurry."

"You'll be nice to Darcy, won't you?"

"If you promise to think only kind things of Lady Mary, no matter what you hear."

"I promise, honey — say, Peachey, there is not a soul in sight but a stupid nurse who has gone to sleep behind her baby buggy. Couldn't you? Just one?"

"You know perfectly well I couldn't, Price Winston. Go on and meet your pet Duke. I'll see you this evening."

CHAPTER XVIII

"Lady Mary!" Peachey put her hand gently on the shaking shoulder of the English nurse.

"Oh — oh — oh," sobbed Mary. "I — I — "

"Can't you look up and talk to me? I am Peachey Meade. I met you at Dorset last Autumn."

The sobbing girl made a desperate effort and controlled herself, even gave a laugh with a touch of its accustomed music.

"I never dreamed of meeting anyone I had ever known before. I remember you well but did not recall your name."

"But I am so glad to see you again. I have thought of you so much. You must be glad to see me, too, or it will make me very sad."

"You dear little American!"

The baby stirred in his sleep and Peachey noticed him for the first time.

"Why, Lady Mary, this is my own nephew, Henry Marshall Meade! What does this mean?"

"It means I am this infant's governess."

"You! Lady Mary Darcy? What would your *belle mere* say?" And then the two girls laughed and laughed.

"And you are the paragon my sister-in-law has told me about," said Peachey. "To think I have been back in Richmond for days and have not seen you before, although Virginia has been dying to show you off to me. Now tell me all about it."

"I will — everything from the beginning. I have felt as though I should burst, so great has been my desire to tell somebody all about it. What your paper says is true, except that I did not elope with Captain Huntington or Captain anybody. I just eloped with myself."

"I knew it! I knew it!" cried Peachey happily.

"As for Captain Huntington — " Mary snapped her fingers disdainfully, "I have seen him only once since the private theatricals and then he was invited to Ensley by my husband's mother. It was while I was convalescing from a long illness."

"You have been ill, then. I am sorry."

"Yes, very ill. The theatricals at Dorset worked me too hard. I had a general breakdown, but my getting well was a happy time — the happiest of all my life, I believe. That is

what makes all the rest so bitter. You see, it was a terrible handicap to happiness to be thrown at each other as Percy and I were by that absurd old Great Aunt Bella, just like people in a trashy novel — a fortune if we married and nothing if we didn't."

"That was trying, though I am sure you cared for Sir Percy or you never would have married him," said Peachey, giving Mary's hand a squeeze.

"Oh, little American, it means so much to me to have you believe in me! I did love him and I thought he loved me — or else that fortune would have been feeding and clothing a hundred English orphans, which was what it was destined to do in case Percy and I did not comply with Aunt Bella's whim. Instead, it went to one Irish orphan, me, and one English half orphan, Percy."

"He does love you. What makes you think he doesn't? Are you sure?"

"As sure as his own actions can make me. His distress at my illness seemed so genuine, his tenderness so sincere, that if I had had any doubts as to his disinterested affection for me they would have been dispelled during my illness and convalescence. We were closer together than we had ever been. People who do

society as hard as we did it before our marriage and even just after, until my illness, are not able to be much together. Ah, that time at Ensley we were one in heart and soul. The only drawback was the dowager, who would visit us."

"Yes, I remember the dowager duchess, an old woman with a hard face and a soft figure."

"Exactly! And her face is no harder than her heart. I made my *debut* in London under her wing and I know full well just what her heart is made of — that is, if she has a heart. She always hated me; seems instinctively to hate the Irish. Oh, by the way, dear little American, please don't tell your sister-in-law that I am Irish. I obtained my situation through the supposition that I was 'a well of English undefiled'."

Peachey promised by a silent pressure of Mary's hand. Then followed a tale of a mad London season chaperoned by the Dowager Duchess of Trice, financed by Great Aunt Bella who was great aunt-in-law to Sir Percy and great aunt to Lady Mary Dale. Aunt Bella held the whip hand over the Duchess of Trice by reason of the fortune which she had in her own right and the final disposition of which she kept a secret, but the dowager duchess always

had hopes of inheriting a comfortable portion. At any rate it was to her interest to comply with any demand made by Aunt Bella, and bringing Lady Mary Dale out in London society was one of those demands.

"Oh, but she hated it and hated me. Percy and I had known each other as children at Ensley, Aunt Bella's home, and when we met again in London his mother did all she could to keep us apart. Then poor old Aunt Bella died leaving that ridiculous will and then the Duchess of Trice pretended to love me very much and hastened up the wedding. Then I had a case of mother-in-lawitis. I was never alone with my husband — always that old woman. She had expected to inherit Ensley herself and she behaved as though she had. Percy is the only one of her children who had any filial feeling and she imposed on him. But still I am grateful to her now because she opened my eyes to the perfidy of her son. It hurt her too, because she does love him, I believe, but she could not let me remain in darkness as to his flagrant immorality."

"I don't believe a word of it!" declared Peachey stoutly.

"But little American, you are so young."

"I am not at all young! In fact, I am very

old — much older than you are — almost twenty-five, and I wager you are not more than twenty-two."

"You are right, but I am old in experience."

"Not at all or you would have known the old woman was lying. I know she was, although I don't know what she said. That is how experienced I am."

Mary laughed.

"Perhaps when you hear all, you will agree with me. At any rate, after the illness of which I told you and while I was still convalescent, Percy found he must go up to London. There was an English princeling to be married and the Reserves called out for a parade. He left me with protestations of affection and regret. I was still very weak and I clung to him. How I loathe myself now for having wept at his departure. It seems the princeling got married without his assistance. He was excused by his colonel because of my illness. He was supposed to come post haste back to Ensley, but in truth he made a flying trip to Paris with his — his mistress. But I shouldn't say such things to you, a young girl."

"I am not a young girl and you need not mince matters with me, although I simply do not believe such an outrageous story."

"Ah, I need not have felt so elated over your defense of me to Mr. Winston. You champion everyone," declared Mary, her sensitive nostrils quivering.

"I champion everyone I think in the right. I knew nothing about you but that you were beautiful and sweet, and that goodness and nobility shone from your face. I know nothing about Sir Percy but that he is a clean, fine looking young Englishman, and I do not believe he could be capable of such perfidy."

"Yes," agreed Mary wistfully, "his appearance certainly belies his character."

"Another thing I know about him," Peachey continued, "and that is he is Price Winston's friend."

"Oh, loyal little lover! But don't you know that men excuse things in one another? Even your perfect Mr. Winston would no doubt wink at the peccadilloes of his friend. Percy would still be a bully good fellow to him, even though he had deceived his wife. But look at me! Men will remember longer the lies that have been told about me than the truth that can be told about my husband. No matter how white my soul may really be, I am as black as any Hottentot in the eyes of all the Price Winstons."

"Oh no, you don't know Price!"

"Neither do you, little lover!"

"But, Lady Mary, how can you be so sure Sir Percy was not with his regiment? It may be a mistake."

Then Mary told of how Captain Huntington had gone to Ensley at the invitation of the duchess and had expressed surprise at not finding Sir Percy Darcy there. He divulged that he had heard Colonel Travis mention the fact that he had been excused from taking part in the parade because of his wife's illness. Then the mother-in-law had a change of heart and showed much tenderness for her son's wife. Her whole manner showed pity for the girl and sorrow over something. Lady Mary found her weeping. Then the ugly story was finally revealed, little by little.

"It was an affair with a French woman — started during the war. Of course Percy was young. I could forgive his having had an affair in his youth. Many things went on during the war that must be forgiven and forgotten. But for him to keep it up after we were engaged — after we were married! Oh, little American, could you forgive your Price if such things should happen?"

"Such things couldn't happen," declared Peachey with heightened color. "But if such

a tale should be brought to me I'd give Price the benefit of the doubt and let him prove his innocence. Did you give Sir Percy that chance?"

"I did not have to. His behavior, when he came back to Ensley, was convincing enough. He was morose and glum and pretended to be jealous at finding Captain Huntington there. Actually had the presumption to pretend he thought I was having an affair with Huntington. Exactly like a man to try to excuse his own faults by finding similar ones in his wife."

"Did he accuse you?"

"Indeed he did not! He did not dare. His mother told me he had asked her if there was anything between Captain Huntington and me. Pah! It makes me ill when I think of the whole wretched business."

"Why wasn't Captain Huntington in London to help the prince get married? Was his regiment excused?"

"Indeed I don't know," Lady Mary's manner was a trifle haughty. "I really took no interest in Captain Huntington's affairs. His only virtue, in my eyes, was that he could act and had helped make the theatricals at Dorset a success."

"Lady Mary, Lady Mary, the duchess can

act, too! I see it all! You have been duped by the dowager duchess and Captain Huntington. It is as plain as day to me. You will see it in time. Did you reproach your husband?"

"Of course not! I have some pride."

"Ah, I thought as much. So has your mother-in-law. What did you do?"

"Since Percy pretended jealousy of Captain Huntington, I gave him every reason to be. I flirted outrageously with the creature for two days."

"The duchess knew you would do that, too. A wise old woman! Has Huntington any money?"

"Nothing but debts, so I have heard."

"I fancy he has been enabled to pay some of those debts lately."

"Miss Meade, what do you mean?"

"I mean that the gallant captain was in the employ of your husband's mother and the whole tale was a fabrication from beginning to end. Very flimsy, too! They knew they were dealing with your impulsive Irish temperament and that you would do just what you have done, only they hardly banked on your disappearing as you did. But the old hag did not know her own son. She thought she had handed down to him some of her own greediness, and when you

fled — thereby forfeiting your share of Aunt Bella's money — she thought he would console himself for your loss by taking unto himself the whole fortune. Instead of that he has scorned the fortune and is going to work for a living."

Mary laughed.

"I can't fancy poor Percy earning a living. Outside of soldiering, I wonder what he can do. If I have to be a nurse maid he will have to be a groom." She tried to make her laugh sound gay, but Peachey was able to detect a note of extreme sadness in it. She was sorry for the English girl but could but feel that she deserved a good shaking. At any rate, she determined to give her a moral shaking at least.

"Now listen!" she said, looking squarely into the eyes of Lady Mary. "The fact of Sir Percy's refusing to touch the money shows he is not mercenary and did not marry you for Aunt Bella's sake. Point one, eh!"

"I grant you it was decent of him, but rather showy."

"No more showy than your leaving as you did!" Peachey's voice was stern.

Mary tried to laugh but the laugh caught in her throat. She tried to look haughty but did not succeed. Why should she allow this little

American to sit in judgment on her? Why, indeed! But why did she pour forth her soul to this same American, telling her details of the last tragic months that she had thought she could never mention to anybody? Of course Lady Mary Darcy did not know that Peachey Meade never went anywhere on train, jitney or trolley, never strolled on the boulevard, bought a yard of ribbon or sat on a park bench, that some one did not tell the story of his or her life into her sympathetic ears.

"I never thought of its being showy, my leaving as I did," faltered Mary.

"No more did Sir Percy. To proceed with the defense: Why did the duchess choose the time when your husband was in London to ask Captain Huntington to Ensley? An axe to grind. Point two! Why did she choose him? Because Sir Percy had not enjoyed the necessary familiarities that occurred between his wife and the gallant captain in the play. I know this because Price Winston said he would not have liked it — and have you not just convinced me that all men are alike? Point three, eh? Why should a mother blacken her own son's character? Even though the scandal were true; why should she tell it to you? She knew the terms of the will: the one who should give

cause for divorce was to forfeit all claims to his or her share of the fortune. Point four!"

"I forgot all about the terms of the will. I was so infuriated," said Lady Mary.

"Yes, and she knew you would forget it and she knew just how infuriated and outraged you would be. She knew also that you could have no proofs of her son's infidelity, because there were none. Point five! But she determined that there should be every proof of — of — at least your imprudence. Point six!"

"Oh, oh, how you see things! A Daniel come to judgment!"

"Not a Daniel; just a descendant of the great Chief Justice!"

"Chief Justice who?"

"Chief Justice Marshall!"

"Of course! I have read of him in my lesson book. But I must go. It is time I had my little charge home. Only fancy — I might lose my situation."

"But Lady Mary, you have not yet promised me to think the matter over — "

"Think it over! I have done nothing but think it over for weeks and weeks. I have almost gone crazy thinking it over. Now I have reached some kind of peace and security away from it all. My health is restored, I have a

darling baby to love, my living is sure, I get plenty of excellent food and a gentleman's library in which I may browse to my heart's content. And now, suddenly, my world is turned topsy-turvy again. Percy coming to Richmond! At least I shall not have to see him."

"But are you aware of the fact he is to dine at my brother's house?"

"Hardly! But you have forgotten, Miss Meade, that one of my virtues, according to my employers, is that I eat in the pantry."

Unconciously, Mary imitated Mrs. Meade's telephone voice and manner. Peachey laughed, although she felt not at all so inclined. She was sure the moral shaking she had given the wayward lady had done no good. Her logical statements, delivered in the most approved "descendant of John Marshall" manner, had been wasted. Too long had the young wife allowed her mind and heart to be poisoned by the tales told by her mother-in-law. The girls walked side by side to the exit of the park, Mary wheeling the perambulator. At last Mary spoke:

"Miss Meade, I can trust you not to divulge my identity to your sister-in-law. It is quite necessary for me to hold this place until some

Irish rents fall due. That will be another month yet."

"Oh, Lady Mary, of course you can trust me. I only want to help you and now you are angry with me."

"My dear, I am not in the least angry. You are kindness itself. Too kind to Darcy. Too long have I thought of him as lying to me. It will take stronger proof than inherited logic to convince me that I am mistaken. I shall have to be shown. As you say in the States, 'I am from Missouri.'"

"But Lady Mary, please think over what I have said," begged Peachey.

"Indade, mum, an' I have no time to be after thinkin' inny more. I'm after goin' to the movies wid Moike on me afternoon out. A poor gurl nades some ricreation — she does that!"

With which parting sally, in the broadest of Irish brogues, Lady Mary Darcy turned and wheeled the baby slowly out Franklin Street.

CHAPTER XIX

Why should Percy be coming to Richmond? Could it be possible that he had tracked her? Was her hard won peace to be disturbed — peace of mind and body? Peace of mind was already gone. The words of the little American had had their effect. No longer could she rest secure in her grievance. How she had hugged to her bosom the righteous indignation of one sinned against! How she had gloried in running away! Was running away ever praiseworthy? She realized as never before that she was nothing but a foolish, inexperienced girl.

"Cowardly, too!" she exclaimed. "Not that I believe for an instant that Percy is faithful to me — but I was a timid fool not to face it." Then she realized she was talking to herself as she wheeled the baby across Stuart Circle, and that passers-by were looking at her curiously.

Suppose she should meet her husband on the street. What should she do? He must not recognize her. The ignominy would be more than she could bear. He need never know she

was in Richmond. She could trust Peachey Meade. She felt sure of the girl. She determined to wear a thick veil until Percy was well on his way.

Richmond was a city only in regard to size and inhabitants. It was a village in that persons who knew one another were constantly meeting. Witness Miss Effie Sharpe Burton, Mary's friend and sponsor, at that moment speeding down Monument Avenue. At a cross-street a plump hand waving from the window of a yellow taxicab made Mary look up in time to catch a glimpse of that comfortable looking person.

"Just home from Washington!" she called. "See you soon!"

"No doubt on the same train with Percy!" thought Mary. "I wonder if she made friends with him and shared her lunch and if he went to sleep on her shoulder."

She regretted not having taken a position as shop girl under Miss Effie's motherly wing. At least in the shop she need never have been discovered by Peachey Meade and would have run much less risk of being seen by the recalcitrant husband. Percy loathed all shops and she could have been safely hidden from him behind the counter. Of course had she not been employed

by Mrs. Meade she would never have known the delight of caring for a baby. It was a delight. The clasp of his little hands thrilled her to the soul and the responsive kick and crow that always greeted her approach was as balm to her wounded heart.

Aunt Maria was cross. The moment one entered the domicile of the Henry Meade's one was conscious of it. There were many signs of stormy weather. Blanche's cap was awry and one wrapped pigtail had slipped its moorings and stuck straight up like a warning finger. Uncle Cy crept around quietly, his kind old face pained and furrowed. In the kitchen a furious rattling of pots and pans could be heard and the ominous rumblings of "No hidin' place down here." Aunt Maria was cross because it had been decreed that since it was Miss Mary's afternoon out Aunt Maria was to mind the baby — Blanche not being trustworthy, and the mistress being booked for a card party.

"'Tain't that I mind nussin'," grumbled the old woman between the stanzas of No Hidin' Place, "but when I nusses I nusses an' when I cooks I cooks. Supper party on han' fer this ebenin' an' all kinds er orders fer chickin' fixin's an' what not an' me a dandlin' the baby when I ought ter be plannin' out my victuals. If

Miss 'Ginia wants ter entertain what she calls the noblebility wher fo' she don't let up on cyards fer a day? Cy ain't a feelin' any too peart, besides."

"Aunt Maria, I'll not take an afternoon off," said Mary, smiling at the irate old woman. "I really do not need to go out and I can stay and take care of the precious baby."

"There you are! Lawd love you chil', I ain't a meanin' you mustn't git off. You's already tied down too much fer a little gal — no fun — no high jinks — nothin' but nussin' day in an' day out. It's jes' the madam I'm wantin' ter stay in. Needn't tell me 'bout Miss 'Ginia. She's all time 'rangin' other folkses business so's they don't git off. Looks lak it kinder hurts her when the he'p has a holiday. One time it's Cy. He mustn't git off kase she's gonter have special comp'ny an' he's sich a stylish butler an' so on an' Blanche can't wait on the table. An' then my day comes an' I mustn't git off kase Mr. Hinery done sent home some wil' ducks an' he'd be so disappointed if I didn't cook 'em. Even Blanche must stay in, though Gawd knows what she kin do when she stays, but Mis 'Ginia fins a 'scuse. She 'cides on Blanche's day out that it's a good time ter train her, or the attic can't wait

another day ter git scrubbed, or the cellar winders need washin' or somethin'. They do say that one er Miss 'Ginia's fo'bears was a overseer an' I mus' say she done took after her great gran' pappy. No, chil', you go on an' make out ter enjy yo'self some. I'm jes' a grumblin' fer grumblin's sake. I reckon me'n Blanche kin make out ter keep the baby chil' fer a few hours. I won't let either one er them out'n my sight."

So Lady Mary Darcy went to the movies with Mike. First the mistress must be driven to the card party, strict orders being given that he should call for her no later than ten minutes of six. Then Mike ran his car in the garage for a moment while he made a rapid change in clothing, converting himself from a stylishly garbed chauffeur into a rather flashily dressed young man out for a holiday with a lady friend. When the lady friend appeared with her pretty face covered up with a blue veil, Mike was disappointed. He had been experiencing delightful thrills ever since the nursery governess had consented to go to the movies with him, thinking of the picture he would present to the other and less fortunate chauffeurs as he drove down Monument Avenue, by his side the very prettiest girl in all the world.

"The hot sun of the morning has burned my face and I must begin wearing a veil," Mary said in explanation.

Whatever she said or did was adorable in Mike's eyes. The veil was not very thick and he could see her delicate profile and how her lashes touched the blue gauze because of the great length of them. Perhaps the other chauffeurs would envy him more because they could not see who was behind the veil. The poise of her head in the soft little grey hat, and the gallant carriage of her shoulders that so set off the grey suit of unmistakable English tailoring, were alluring enough. There was no doubt that he was envied.

It was a proud Mike who bought tickets for two, paying extra for a box in the center.

"We won't be crowded in the box seats," he explained, "and you can eat your candy in peace," and Mike produced a box of chocolates.

A comedy was on the screen. Mary laughed happily. She was glad she had come with Mike. Maybe she could forget her troubles for a little while. It was pleasant to have someone looking after her so kindly. She removed her veil and, like a school girl, bit into a luscious chocolate. She laughed again as the comedian slid down a coal chute.

"You are easy to please, Miss. This ain't much of a picture. Some night we'll have to take in a vardvil. You'd like that, wouldn't ye?"

"Immensely!"

"Do you know, Miss, somehow you don't seem English to me. It's your laugh. English nurse maids don't know how to laugh. They either tee-hee or haw-haw. Now there's a ring to your laugh that reminds me of home."

"Home?"

"Yes, home! In my country they laugh because they love to laugh, and sometimes they laugh to keep from crying —"

"Crying?"

"Yes, I have seen my Mither, God rest her soul, laugh when the rain was coming through the hole in the thatch, wetting the bed so we had to sit by the peat fire all night with no place to sleep."

"Well, that was funny," laughed Mary with a little catch in her voice.

"And I've seen her cover her face and burst out crying to keep from laughing when old Tim Creel got drunk at his mother-in-law's funeral and fell in the open grave."

"Tim Creel, the old rip!" cried Mary, wiping the tears from her eyes.

"In Donegal—" Mike began another reminiscent narration.

"Donegal, Mike?"

"Sure and where did ye think I was from?"

"Mike, Mike, so am I!"

"I knew it! Oh, Miss Mary!"

"But please, Mike, don't be after telling the mistress. She is setting so much store on having an English governess and I might be after losing my place if she hears I come from Donegal."

"Sure and mum's the word."

"My father was English but my mother was all Irish. To be sure I was born in England, but I was very small and could not help it."

"Of course not," declared Mike of the understanding heart.

"My mother and I lived a great deal of the time in Ireland. I do love Ireland! What is your whole name, Mike?"

"Michael McManus, Miss!"

"McManus," Mary's voice shook and she put a hand on Mike's arm. "And was your mother's name Kathleen?"

"Yes, Miss!"

"And was she once lady's maid for Miss Diana Rowney of Redlands, who married Lord Dale?"

"Yes, Miss, that she was, and fine people they were."

"Michael, Michael, don't you know me? Can't you remember a naughty little girl who would sometimes spend the day in your mother's cottage and would order you about so much, and always demanded the largest and mealiest praties for herself and would lead you on to pull the curly tails of the little pigs to make them squeal for her amusement 'til Kathleen came and boxed your ears?"

The comedian had emerged from under a ton of coal that had followed him down the chute, and all unconscious of his blackened face had appeared at his own wedding after many and various vicissitudes in the way of bulldogs and irate rivals. The audience rocked with laughter, but Michael McManus and his lady friend might have been back in Donegal for all the attention they gave the screen.

When the truth of his companion's identity burst upon Mike, he sprang from his seat and pulled his forelock.

"Oh, little Lady Mary! What does it all mean? Why are you here in Richmond working for your living — you the daughter of Miss Di Rowney and a noble lord?"

"Not allowed to stand up during the show,"

said an usher sternly. "Sit down! Sit down! Can't you see you are disturbing the others?"

"Sit down, Michael! We can talk afterwards," whispered Mary.

"Let's get out of this now," suggested Mike.

"Wait, I must compose myself. See, it is a news reel and I like them."

"Not much news, that foreign stuff. It is months old lots of times, but if you like it, all well and good."

London streets — the marriage of an English prince — notables riding in automobiles — crowds of adoring subjects out to catch a glimpse of royalty — soldiers and more soldiers. Some on foot, some on horses. Mary held her breath. She was back in London for the moment. She recognized various notables as the reel ran on, whispering their names to Mike. Suddenly she sat up very straight and clutched Mike's arm. A crack regiment was marching into the camera.

"Look! There's Colonel Travis. Isn't he soldierly! But Mike, look — see that man coming towards us on the left? That tall one — the handsomest of them all — that one — that one! Oh, Michael, that is my husband, Sir Percy Darcy!"

"Your husband?"

"Yes, Yes! I must speak to him!" Mary sprang to her feet.

"Sit down, you in front!" hissed a disgruntled person behind.

Mary sank back in her seat.

"Gone! Gone! I couldn't catch his eye. He was in London with his regiment — and I believed those fiends! Oh, Michael, take me out. I must have air."

CHAPTER XX

Mike, like a model chauffeur, opened the door of the closed car and touching his hat, stood waiting for Lady Mary to enter.

"Why, Michael, I'm not going to sit back there all by myself."

"It's not fitting for the likes of you to be driving around on the front seat with a common boy like me."

"Absurd! I'm the same poor girl you were kind enough to want to give a little pleasure. The only difference is you are no longer a stranger, but the son of my mother's old friend and my one time companion. Oh, Michael, please don't treat me like anything but the little girl who used to make you pull the pigs' curly tails."

"Just as you say, Lady Mary!"

"Not that either, please, Michael. You might call me Masquerading Mary but not Lady Mary. I couldn't hold my job a minute if Mrs. Meade found out about me. I must hold my job, you see."

Mary settled herself on the front seat with Mike and that worthy looked thoroughly embarrassed and uncomfortable. No longer was he the gay, debonnaire youth out for a holiday with his lady friend. He sat uncompromisingly stiff, skillfully manipulating his wheel, his countenance as wooden as he could make it while hot surges of color suffused his neck and face.

"Home, Miss?" he asked as, escaping the crowded down-town traffic, he turned his car into West Franklin.

"Oh, please Mike, could we take a little spin in the country? After all, it is my afternoon off and if I go home I shall just have to take up my duties. Would it be wrong for you to take me for a little ride? I mean, would it get you in trouble with Mrs. Meade to have her car out?"

"I'm not caring about Mrs. Meade," said Mike bitterly. "I'm only after thinking about you. I can't make it out."

And for the second time that day Lady Mary Darcy told her story. Mike was all attention. He guided the car slowly and carefully along a pleasant country road, never missing a word that fell from the lips of Mary, his Lady Mary. Gradually the stiffness of his manner gave way

to the natural Irish of the boy. He even began to ask an occasional question. She told him of her reason for falling so naturally into the role of nurse maid because of the costume being in her trunk.

"And your name — why did you call yourself Hill?"

"Easy enough. You see my maiden name was Dale and it came to me that it would be easy to remember who I was if I thought of 'Up Hill and down Dale.' I made up the name on the spur of the moment. It would have been sad if I had called myself a name that I could never remember. But Michael, the exciting part is yet to come. My husband, Sir Percy Darcy, is in Richmond this very minute and will dine with Mr. and Mrs. Meade this very evening. I could not bear to have him see me. I know he hates me and never wants to see me again. He may think the worst of me. I may manage to peep at him, but he must never know that I am in the house, or even the city. If he believes those things that are in the newspaper, I cannot blame him. Did I not believe terrible things of him until this very afternoon when I saw him marching with his regiment? Oh, Michael, life is an awfully mixed up affair. Don't ever get married, Michael."

"No, Miss, I'm thinking not. I might draw a mother-in-law like the old Do-wagger you got."

"Do-wagger!" laughed Mary. "I shall have to go back to England someday just to call her that."

Mike was late going for the mistress, not very late, but being late at all was one of the many things for which Mrs. Meade would not stand. It was especially irritating on this occasion because of the important guest expected for dinner. The chauffeur offered no explanation or excuse for his delay. "Sorry, Mrs. Meade," was all he vouchsafed.

"Sorry indeed, when every minute counts, and here you have kept me waiting at least half an hour."

Since it was at most only five minutes after the time set by the mistress for his calling for her, Mike deigned no reply, feeling sure that Mrs. Meade was quite aware of the fact but no doubt would insist upon the half hour and there was no use in arguing with her. There was something about the expression in the chauffeur's eyes that reminded Mrs. Meade vaguely of her husband — also a certain mannish carriage of the head and set of the shoulder. No two persons could be more unlike than

Henry Marshall Meade III and Michael McManus, so the subtle likeness must have arisen from a kindred thing that Virginia Meade fancied was that hated quality of humor. It was bad enough to have ones husband laughing up his sleeve at one, but it was simply unbearable for an Irish chauffeur to presume in like manner.

Blanche opened the door at the impatient ring of the mistress. The moment she entered the house she sensed discord. The baby was crying fretfully and Aunt Maria was rumbling her favorite trouble motif: "No hidin' place down here." All the doors were open straight back from the front hall, through the dining room and butler's pantry to kitchen, so that singing and crying — as well as cooking — permeated the entire house. Blanche's cap was still on crooked and her apron was on hind-part-before.

"What does this mean? Put your cap on straight! Why do you wear your apron that way?" Mrs. Meade's voice could have etched glass.

"I done forgot to pull it 'roun'," giggled Blanche. "I wears it back fo'most ter keep it clean."

"What is the matter with the baby?"

"Aunt Maria says he's cuttin' a tooth but it looks ter me mo' lak a tooth air a cuttin' him. He been frettin' right smart all evenin'."

"And where is Miss Mary? Surely she is not going to take the whole day off."

"Miss Mary done jes' this minute come in. She been ridin' in the country with Mr. Mike. Fust she went to the movies — leastways I reckon she did. I ain't hearn tell whether she's gonter give up her time off or not. Aunt Maria done said nigger nusses gits all the even' an' nights off oncet a week an' she reckon Miss Mary needs a change as much as nigger nusses."

"Well, shut the doors leading into the back of the house and be quick about it. I wish I knew how many times I have told the servants in my house to keep those doors shut. Where is Uncle Cy? I do hope he has got the table properly set."

"Lawsamussy, Miss 'Ginia, I pretty nigh forgot to tell you 'bout Uncle Cy. He done gone home with the miz'ry."

"The what? You don't mean Cy has deserted me at this critical time?"

"Yassum, he done doubled up like a wooly worm an' gone off to put a mustard plarster on his stummick. He sent what respects he could make out to 'spress betwixt groans. I done sot

the table though — and I sho' have sot it in style."

Poor Mrs. Meade! Life held many problems. She pushed the well meaning Blanche aside and hurried to the dining room. Blanche had set the table and set it in style. A memorable trip on a steamboat had established an ideal for the girl. This was her first opportunity in which she could express herself and she had eagerly grasped it. The table was laden with silver and glass, the knives and forks stacked like guns, with spoons nicely balanced across each tepee. The napkins were stuck in the goblets, nicely folded to simulate calla lilies. The centerpiece was a fearsome combination of red geraniums and purple flags.

"My God!" cried Mrs. Meade, with no thought of sacrilege. "What am I to do?"

"Don't you like what I done?" asked Blanche wistfully.

"Like it!! You — you — never mind what — go call Miss Mary to me this minute. Tell Aunt Maria to please change her tune unless she can keep the kitchen door shut, and you go take the baby and try to keep him quiet a minute."

Mary came quickly. Her eyes were red with weeping. She had no intention of demanding

the whole evening off, but she had felt that a few moments of quiet in her room were necessary before she could resume her duties. She, too, had heard the baby crying, but for the moment her own troubles were on top.

"Miss Mary, can you set a table?"

"Certainly, Mrs. Meade, I think I can. Where is Uncle Cy."

"Gone home pretending he is sick. I don't see how he could treat me this way."

"The poor old man! I thought this morning he looked quite ill." Then Mary caught sight of the table and before she could remember to restrain herself her laughter rang out.

"I see nothing to laugh about," said Mrs. Meade, with extreme dignity.

"Perhaps not, but let me attend to this, Mrs. Meade. At least I know how it should be. You had better dress and then you can see if I have done it properly."

The mistress, somewhat relieved, hurried off. With deft touches Mary restored order to the demoralized table. She removed the geraniums from the purple *fleur de lys* and the napkins from the goblets and placed the silver in neat rows, quite after the manner of the incomparable Cy. It was finished before the hostess was dressed. Mary then hurried off to resume the

care of the fretful baby. It was a tooth, combined with the handling given the little fellow, first by Aunt Maria and then by Blanche. He had tried desperately to go to sleep, but had been kept awake by too much attention. Had he been able to join in the chorus, no doubt he would have joyously and understandingly helped Aunt Maria with her "No hidin' place down here." With a pitiful sob he snuggled his face down in Mary's neck and his crying ceased. He was fast asleep almost before she could undress him and put him in his cradle.

Mrs. Meade was dressed, except the fastening of some refractory hooks that she could not reach. She hurried down to the dining room to view and approve Mary's handiwork. The baby's wails had ceased and Aunt Maria had either given up trying to find a hiding place or had decided that the waffle batter needed all her attention. The doors were shut and the house had resumed its wonted quiet and dignity. Blanche poked a grinning head into the dining room.

"Miss 'Ginia, Uncle Cy say he thinks I mought make out ter han' the victuals fer oncet, bein' as 'tain't a co'se dinner."

"Cyrus must be delirious," responded Mrs. Meade. "Have you ever waited on a table?"

"Yessum, I's been a great han' fer helpin' at the barbecues down in 'Melia County an' I's dished out gallons er Brunswick stew at barskit funerals. Uncle Cy he says I look lak a champinzee tryin' ter serve, but Aunt Maria says she'll see to it that the eatin's is good enough fer the folks to 'scuse the way they is handed."

"Well, that *is* a comfort! But tell me, do you know which side to serve on?"

"Whichever side you is standin' on, I reckon. I don't think it would be very politeful ter rech across folks."

"Do you know which is your right hand?"

"I don't believe I got airy right han'. Folks a been tellin' me all my life that I got two lef' han's."

"Do you know which is my right hand?"

"No'm, but cyan't you tell yo'se'f by which one you jes' natchelly does things with?"

"Of course I know, you idiot, but you must know, too, so you can pass things to my left."

"Yo' lef'! Whatfer you talkin' 'bout yo' hight han' when you want me ter know 'bout yo' lef'? I ain't never said I didn't know 'bout yo' lef'. I knows that well enough by the di'mon' buckle on yo' lef' shoulder. I's havin' a dress made jes' lak you's cept'n fer the buckle. Yo's is on the lef' but mine's a gonter be on the

right 'kase Miss Mary done tole me it's all the style in Lunnon ter have the trimmin' on the right."

Mrs. Meade looked ruefully at the buckle of brilliants that caught the drapery of her gown on the left shoulder. She picked at it tentatively, wondering vaguely if Sir Percy Darcy would notice which shoulder carried the ornamentation. At this juncture Mr. Meade let himself in with his latchkey and his wife called excitedly to him from the dining room.

CHAPTER XXI

"You're looking mighty pretty, honey," said the husband, kissing his wife fondly. "How comes along the dinner to royalty?"

"Oh, Henry, I am in so much trouble! Mike was disgracefully late coming for me at the card party. I only this minute got home. You must speak to him about it. It is almost time for Sir Percy to arrive. Uncle Cy has gone home doubled up with cramps. I can't even get my dress hooked up — and the most stylish butler on Monument Avenue, too," and Virginia wept a few wifely tears on her husband's shoulder.

"Poor old Cy! Maybe there was method in his madness. Can't your housegirl do it, or even Miss Mary?"

Drying her eyes, Virginia looked up.

"Oh Henry, do you think I might ask her?"

"Who, Blanche? I think you might, but why don't you let me do it?"

"You! Wait on the table?"

"I thought you were talking about hooking up your dress."

"Henry Marshall Meade, you shall not joke at a time like this."

"I'm not joking, and to show you I'm not, I'll hook you up." He turned her around and with practiced hand brought hook to eye with business-like precision.

"But, Henry, do you really think I might ask Miss Mary to serve dinner this evening? You suggested it."

"Why, Virginia Wilson Meade! You know I did nothing of the kind. How could you ask a veritable lady to wait on the table? But here is Peachey," he announced in a relieved tone. "Come on, sister, and get in on this family conclave."

"I came early so I could see the baby before he goes to sleep," said Peachey. "It is so kind of you to ask me, Virginia. I ran away without waiting to see Cousin Elizabeth to tell her I was dining out. I left a message with Mrs. Leander Peake, however."

"It must be a relief to get away from Cousin Elizabeth for a meal," laughed Henry. "Poor old Cousin Elizabeth. You should have asked her, Virginia."

"What! To meet Sir Percy Darcy! Heavens above, Henry, I have your cousin to luncheon occasionally but I'd hardly ask her to dine with

such a person as Sir Percy. No, indeed! I asked Mrs. Johnston, but she couldn't come so I asked Mrs. Tucker Byrd to make the sixth. She is handsome and spirited and styilsh and will make a good impression on a nobleman. But, Peachey, I am in great trouble."

"Oh, Virginia, I am so sorry. Nothing serious, I hope."

"Serious indeed! Uncle Cyrus is too sick to serve dinner."

"Poor old Uncle Cy! I do hope he is not very ill. It is too bad. The poor old fellow!"

"Oh, he'll be all right. It is not having anyone to wait on the table that is worrying me."

"Where is the housegirl you have been training all winter?"

"That orang-outang! I have already wasted a half hour trying to teach her which is the left side."

"Oh!" teased her husband, "I understood you had only been home five minutes." Virginia withered him with a glance. She scorned Peachey's proposal that Aunt Maria should let Blanche cook the waffles while she waited on the table, calling her a fat old thing with no style whatsoever.

"Your brother has suggested to me, Peachey, that I ask the nursery governess, Miss Mary,

to wait on the table. I think it a good suggestion, don't you?"

Peachey clapped her hand over her mouth to keep back the "Lady Mary!" that almost came out. Henry insisted that he had not suggested the governess at all, that Virginia had misunderstood him, but Virginia's eyes had taken on the expression she had no doubt inherited from the overseer ancestor, that one of "you do if you don't want to die."

"I don't want to argue with you, Henry, it may have been an unconscious suggestion but it was your suggestion. Miss Mary is not so much of a lady after all. I have been very much mistaken in her. I have not been able to place her exactly until now, but I am sure she belongs to the lower middle class and no doubt is quite accustomed to waiting at table."

Henry and Peachey looked at one another. Peachey almost decided that she should break faith with Lady Mary Darcy and divulge to her brother that it was impossible for the wife of the guest of honor to serve the dinner, but the humor of the situation appealed to her and a promise was a promise and Peachey Meade had never been known to break one.

"I don't see how you can say La — Miss Mary is not a lady, Virginia. I saw her in the

park this morning with my little nephew and she seems to me to be what one might call an 'exquisite lady'."

"Hardly, when she spent the afternoon with Mike at the movies and afterwards driving in the country with him. For my part, I think she is hardly a nice person to go out with a common Irishman like Mike."

"An uncommon Irishman I call Mike," laughed Mr. Meade, "with uncommonly good taste. I don't know why Miss Mary went with him, but she could go with the scum of the earth — which Mike isn't — and still be a lady. Let me telephone to the club for one of the waiters to come help us out, my dear."

"I prefer your first suggestion. Blanche, ask Miss Mary to come here a minute," she commanded, espying a listening ear at the crack of the door. "Oh, I forgot something. Please excuse me, Peachey, I must telephone the society editress of the morning paper. I promised the poor girl I'd give her any news that came up. She has a hard time this time of the year filling her column, with all the parties over and done with and nobody getting married in May because it is such bad luck."

Brother and sister looked at each other again. Had Virginia caught the glance she would have

been irritated indeed, for the expression was not exactly one of humor.

"Miss Davis," she called into the receiver, "this is Mrs. Henry Marshall Meade the Third. Yes, I remember I promised to give you any news that should come to my knowledge. Well, this evening I am entertaining at dinner. My guests are Mrs. Tucker Byrd, Miss Peachey Meade, Mr. Price Winston, lately of London — attaché at the Court of St. James you know — and Sir Percy Darcy. Yes, *Sir* Percy! Younger brother of the Duke of Trice. I believe he is Honorable Sir Percy, but I am not sure. Of course I am too democratic to think much about foreign titles. What's that you say? No, I have not read the morning paper, at least nothing but the society column. Oh, I am sure it cannot be the same man. A divorce scandal! Please, Miss Davis, don't publish anything in connection with Sir Percy until you hear from me."

Mary entered the room as Mrs. Meade hung up the receiver. Peachey could hardly resist the temptation to take the English girl in her arms. There was no doubt that she had been weeping. Her eyes were red but at the same time her expression was in a measure exalted. The bitterness, that had at times crept into her face during

the interview in the park, was gone. She looked like a tired child who had been naughty but who was "all whipped and good again." The girls' eyes met. Peachey's signalled sympathy and understanding. Mary's answered trust and confidence.

"What's Percy been doing?" asked Mr. Meade as his wife turned from the telephone.

"Nothing himself! It's his wife who is to blame, I am sure," declared the woman. "Miss Davis says there is an account in the morning paper of a disgraceful divorce mix-up that Sir Percy Darcy is involved in. I am sure it is his wife. Anyhow, he is still brother to the Duke of Trice. Ah, Miss Mary, will you please find the morning paper for me and then I wish to ask a favor of you."

Mary's expression was a bit quizzical as she hurried away to execute the mistress's orders. She very well knew that the morning paper was in her room, much crumpled and with a few wet blotches on the foreign news.

Virginia must bustle her husband off to change for dinner. She followed him to make sure he made no mistake in regard to the proper tie. Peachey was alone when Mary came back with the paper, still struggling to smooth out the creases and wrinkles.

"My dear little friend, I am so glad to see you alone for a moment! You can never guess what happened to me this afternoon! I saw Percy at the cinema — he was marching with his regiment in London. It was the wedding of the prince."

"Wonderful! And now you will let him know you are in Richmond. You will even let him see you this evening. Absolve me from my promise and permit me to tell my brother who you are. Won't you please, Lady Mary?"

"I can't tell yet, I am so overwrought and have had no time to think. If I only knew how he felt towards me. He may believe the things that old — old thing has told about me. That will be hard to forgive."

"How about what you believed about him?"

"Ah, still the Daniel come to judgment! But listen; another wonderful thing has happened to me. It turns out that Mike and I were playmates in Donegal. His mother, Kathleen McManus, was my mother's maid."

"At the risk of being put down as bromidic, I must say 'how small the world is.'"

"Small or not, bromidic or not, I must say it is a very beautiful world. But tell me, little American, how am I to see Percy without his seeing me? I am sure I would know at a glance

whether he is missing me or not and if he wants me back."

"I imagine my resourceful sister-in-law will arrange that for you. She has a proposition to make to you that no doubt will astonish you somewhat. Don't do what she wants, I beg of you. Here she comes!"

"Ah, thank you, Miss Mary," said Mrs. Meade, taking the paper. "How rumpled it is! I fancy someone else has been interested in the same item, as it is all read up. I'll look over it later. Er — Miss Mary, have you ever — er — er —waited at table?"

"Yes, madam, for hours at a time." Peachey tried not to giggle.

"Ah, at restaurants, perhaps?"

"Yes, madam, occasionally, but oftener at long, heavy English dinners which one takes hours to consume."

"I am very glad you have had some experience. You see, I'm in quite a predicament. My butler, Cyrus, is ill and cannot serve dinner. Perhaps you know I am to have an English nobleman here."

"Yes, madam!"

"Blanche is out of the question. You must see that."

"Yes, madam, she might spill the soup."

"We are not going to have soup. Of course I know soup should always be served at formal dinners, but Mr. Winston has requested me to have a typical Virginia supper. It seems he has spoken of these suppers to Sir Percy and his wife Lady Mary."

"Yes, I remember — er — er, yes, madam."

Peachey came to the rescue with an assurance that Price Winston knew well where to bring the Englishman for the very best food in Richmond. Virginia, flattered by the praise, lost sight of Miss Mary's confusion.

"And now I am going to ask you to help me out of my predicament by waiting on the table, Miss Mary."

"Certainly, madam, I shall do my best for you. I may be awkward, as my only experience has been at English dinners."

Peachey gasped her amazement. She had expected Lady Mary to refuse point blank and here she was calmly deciding to wait on the table where her own husband was the guest of honor. She was lost in admiration at the perfect piece of acting. Lady Mary had assumed the manner and voice of an English servant.

"You must not be nervous," said Mrs. Meade in a relieved tone. "I am sure you will do quite nicely."

"I can but do my best," declared Mary smugly. "The only fear I have is that my tooth that is already giving me trouble may cause my jaw to swell. It often does this way and now it has begun it may be quite bad in a short while."

The girl turned her cheek for the mistress to see a puffiness that had developed miraculously in the last few minutes.

"It does not hurt me very much, madam," Mary continued, "but it is extremely disfiguring — not that it is of any importance, but I merely wished to inform you that my jaw may be much larger before dinner is served. You must not be astonished at my appearance. Can madam furnish me a cap and apron?"

Virginia hurried off for the required badge of a waitress. Peachey sank in a chair, completely overcome with laughter while Lady Mary assidulously practiced toothache in the mirror over the mantelpiece.

"But you can never carry it off, Lady Mary. Sir Percy is sure to recognize you no matter how swollen your jaw is or how much you masquerade in cap and apron."

"You don't know Englishmen, child. They never see servants. They are nothing more than hands to them, hands to serve them."

"Sounds like Prince Dumbling in the story of the White Cat," laughed Peachey.

"Yes, I am sure Dumbling was English."

"You may be able to serve a whole meal without your husband's seeing you, but you need not think you can put anything over on Price Winston."

"Perhaps you had better warn him. He might recognize me and ruin the whole party."

"Don't you believe it. His profession is diplomacy."

"There speaks the lover! Do you think for an instant that Mr. Winston could carry off such a situation — to find himself being waited on at the table of his future brother-in-law by the run-away wife of an Englishman present?"

"I am as sure that Price will recognize you and carry it off as you are that Sir Percy will not see you, or seeing you, not recognize you."

"I dare you not to warn your lover."

"I take the dare."

"Done!"

CHAPTER XXII

The telephone rang vigorously as Mrs. Meade returned with a new cap and apron she had in reserve. It was Mrs. Tucker Byrd, who at the eleventh hour must cancel her dinner engagement because of the illness of a mere brother-in-law. Of course the hostess took Colonel Byrd's having a stroke quite personally. It was one more thing conspiring against the success of her entertainment of the nobility. The fact that her husband and sister-in-law expressed sympathy for the dear old colonel but added to her irritation. Mrs. Byrd should have let her know sooner, so Mrs. Meade declared, although the stroke had only just happened. No one could be asked that late in the day to fill her place. The table all upset! There was nothing more disconcerting than an unbalanced table. Peachey almost felt that it was up to her to withdraw so that the table might balance.

Mary suddenly remembered the message she was to deliver. So many things had been crowded into her day that she had completely

forgotten Miss Somer. The unbalanced table brought the incident to mind.

"Excuse me, madam, but I forgot to tell you that I met a lady in the park this morning who sent you a message that she was coming to supper."

"Sent me a message? Who could it have been? You surely asked her name?" exclaimed poor Virginia, impatiently.

"No, madam, but she was evidently a close connection of the family as she called all of you by name. She was dressed in what might be called dripping black. She suggested, among other things, that I make myself useful by rolling and whipping, not the pram and the baby, but ruffles. She also told me that she had embroidered the pram cover —"

"Heavens!" cried Virginia. "Cousin Elizabeth Somer! Well! At least my table balances now. But to think of your Cousin Lizzie coming! Wouldn't it have been terrible if she and Mrs. Tucker Byrd had both come? After all, it is providential that since Colonel Byrd was going to have a stroke he had it before dinner."

Mary took the cap and apron and beat a hasty retreat. A prolonged ringing of the bell and Blanche came tearing down the hall.

"Am it the phome or air it the do' bell?" she asked excitedly.

"The door bell, fool — the door bell!" said the mistress sternly. "To think of your suggesting that creature as a possible waitress, Henry!"

"Did you rope in Miss Mary after all, Virginia? I think it is a shame to ask her. She looks to me like a princess in exile. And what a pretty wit she has, don't you think so, Peachey?" Peachey did think so.

"Rolling the pram and whipping the baby!" laughed her brother. Virginia stiffened.

"I have an idea a negro mammy would be better for baby until he is a little older. I don't like for a nurse to suggest that she might strike my child. I know you and Peachey are going to tell me that was a joke, but I think some things are too serious for jest."

It was Miss Somer arriving. She came sweeping into the drawing room with the air of being monarch of all she surveyed.

"Well, Virginia," she said in an extra deep rumble, "your servants are very slow in answering the bell. You got my message, I suppose."

"Yes, Cousin Elizabeth," Virginia presented an icy cheek for Miss Somer's perfunctory peck, "I received your message. I am sorry

you should have been kept waiting at the door, but your persistent ringing confused a green housemaid."

"And Peachey!" boomed Miss Somer. "You did not tell me you were going out to supper."

"Neither did you tell me. I left a message with Mrs. Leander Pike, however. I did not know I was invited to dinner until later in the day."

"'Ah, indeed! Very attentive of Virginia to get up a little family party in my honor."

"It is not exactly a family party, Cousin Elizabeth," said the hostess, who was plainly irritated. "Price Winston is to be here and —"

"Well, Price Winston seems to be trying to connect himself with the family, not that I approve —"

"And he is bringing with him Sir Percy Darcy." Virginia pronounced the name very distinctly and with evident enjoyment. Miss Somer was not at all impressed. The English nobility was nothing to her. She thought much more of Virginia aristocracy. If high born Englishmen happened to have settled in Virginia they had some cause for pride of birth and family, but otherwise they did not amount to much in her eyes.

"The first Somer who came to this country

married a Darcy, a great lady, and the third cousin once removed from the then reigning monarch. I am very glad you have asked this young man to meet me as I shall take pleasure in conversing with him on the subject of our ancestors."

Virginia remembered the newspaper item which she had not had time to read. Leaving her husband to entertain his impossible kinswoman, she rapidly perused the rumpled page.

Something made her knit her pretty brow.

"Lady Mary Dale!" she exclaimed. Then she opened the drawer of an antique writing desk and drew forth Miss Mary's credentials. "Peachey, come here!" she commanded excitedly. "Look at this letter of recommendation that Miss Mary gave me when I employed her. It is certainly signed Lady Mary Dale. And see here — this newspaper says Sir Percy Darcy's wife is, or rather was, Lady Mary Dale. I wonder the governess did not tell me she had been in the employ of Sir Percy. Very sneaky and secretive I call her. I intend to ask Sir Percy what he knows about her. It is due Henry Marshall Meade the Fourth that we know more about the person who has him in charge."

"Oh, Virginia, I wouldn't mention the mat-

ter to Sir Percy if I were you. You see, Englishmen are so funny about servants — that is, high-born Englishmen are. They may never even notice them — look upon them as mere hands to serve them. I really think it would be the height of inelegance to broach the subject to Sir Percy."

"Perhaps you are right. Of course you have been abroad and all that, but — "

"I tell you what we can do: Price can ask him about it to-morrow. Men can talk about things to each other without its being inelegant. Price wouldn't mind. And, Virginia, I wouldn't mention the matter to er — er — Miss Mary, either. You see, the important thing is to get your supper properly served and if the nerves of the waitress get upset she might — might spill the soup down our backs."

"But we are not going to have soup."

Virginia wished heartily she had never decided on this old-fashioned Virginia supper. Here was another person expecting soup. No doubt Sir Percy would be wondering where the soup was. And here was that tiresome Mary again, come for final instructions perhaps, though any fool should be able to wait on the table without so much fuss about it.

Mary was looking very pretty in cap and

apron. Evidently the toathache was arrested, as there was no sign of swelling. She had not come for final instructions, evidently feeling quite capable of waiting on an American table after her experience in England, but she wished to tell the mistress that it was perhaps best not to leave the baby alone for the evening as his teeth were undoubtedly cutting him.

"I do not mean he is ill, but he is restless and the nursery is far from the dining room."

Miss Somer, feeling that something was going on that might possibly need her interference, left off in the middle of a sentence, in which she had been expounding to her Cousin Henry Meade how much more important was the family of Somer than all the Marshalls and Meades put together. She came forward and looked critically at the governess.

"So you remembered my message, did you? I thought afterwards I was imprudent to trust it to you. I neglected to tell you who I was, forgetting for the moment that you did not belong in Richmond, where every one who knows anything at all knows me."

"I was able to identify you to Mrs. Meade by the same means that you did my charge — the perambulator robe, madam."

"You gave Mrs. Meade all my messages?"

"I am afraid I did not give her quite all of them, madam."

"She gave me enough, I am sure," said Virginia, impatiently.

"Did she tell you I said the baby did not have on sufficient clothing?"

"Excuse me, madam, but the message was that the baby was too warmly clad. I realized it myself as the sun grew hotter and so I removed his little sacque."

A snort from Miss Somer, indicative of her having been worsted only for the moment, though all who knew her knew that she would return to the charge later on.

"And the baby, Mrs. Meade?" asked Mary, remembering about her toothache and wondering if the mistress had noticed that the ominous swelling had gone down.

"I'll send Blanche to look after him."

"But, Mrs. Meade, could Blanche be trusted not to spill the baby any more than the soup?"

"We are not going to have soup, but I catch your meaning. Who can look after Baby then?"

"I would suggest Mike as a reliable person who is accustomed to babies."

Mrs. Meade looked meaningly at her husband. Miss Mary was evidently eager for the

society of the chauffeur. As for asking him to take care of a baby — that was absurd. She knew for a fact that he had left his last place because of being required to air a dog. For her part she wouldn't dare ask such a favor.

"Perhaps he would do it for you, Miss Mary," Mrs. Meade's voice had a slight edge on it and her manner was a bit aggressive.

"I am sure he would," said the governess sweetly. "If I might suggest madam's sending for Michael."

Mike was in the hall, evidently expecting to be sent for, and was promptly reprimanded for having kept the mistress waiting. There was a scowl on his pleasant Irish face and he walked with something of a swagger. The moment he caught sight of Mary his manner changed. He gave a perfunctory bow to his employers and with his eyes riveted on the nursery governess he pulled his forelock in the manner of the peasantry of Erin.

"Michael," said Mary, "Mrs. Meade is in a predicament. Her butler is ill and she is expecting distinguished guests for dinner. I am going to wait on the table for her —"

"You!" cried the boy, aghast.

"Yes, Michael," in a voice all gentleness, "and I want you to do something for me."

"Anything you ask, La — Miss Mary," humbly.

"The baby is a little restless because of his first tooth, which is trying to come through. I want you to look after him while I am busy."

"Sure, and that's easy."

"Thank you so much, Michael. All you have to do is sit in the nursery, and if he frets turn him over. If he cries, take him up and comfort him — but you know so much about babies I need not tell you any more."

"No, miss, I think I can manage." Turning to Mr. Meade: "Is that all, sir?"

"That is all, Mike, and thank you very much." Not a word of reprimand.

"And now, what do you think of her?" asked Mrs. Meade, when nursery governess and chauffeur had departed. "She has got Mike so under hack I believe he would air a dog if she asked him to. Disgusting, I think it is. Not such a lady as you and Peachey would have her be, eh?"

"More of one, if possible," declared Henry. "She did not exactly ask Mike — she just told him. If she tells me to do something I am mighty afraid I'll do it, too. Gee whiz! Isn't she a beauty in apron and cap?"

"If you think she is beautiful with that

swollen jaw you must be as much under hack as Mike. I have always heard that the English have poor dentists and the women lose their teeth early in life. I rather suspect this Miss Mary's front teeth are false."

"A forward hussy, I call her," boomed forth Miss Somer. "I recognize her now as a doubtful character we harbored for a short time at the home for working girls. I can't recall the circumstance of her being there, but I remember quite well she was a doubtful character and nothing but Puss Johnston's soft and foolish amiability and so called charity made the Board put up with her even for the short time she remained with us. I predict that no good will come of your hiring such a person, Virginia. The matron of the home even had doubts about her owning the trunk she had there. It had initials on it that did not correspond with the name she gave as her own. As I recall the incident, I think the matron rather suspected the girl of having stolen the trunk as well as the clothes in it."

CHAPTER XXIII

Her Golden Knight was in the house. Mary had heard the door-bell from her room, where she had flown to put on the toothache make-up as well as a few aging touches in the way of delicately drawn lines from nostrils to the corners of the mouth, a suggestion of crows' feet and a master stroke of a bit of court plaster covering one pearly front tooth. The swelling from the troublesome eye tooth was taken care of very well by forcing a wad of absorbent cotton under the upper lip, thereby twisting her pretty mouth all out of shape and giving to her face a sad, though ludicrous, expression.

Her Golden Knight! Nobody had ever known that she thought of Sir Percy as her Golden Knight. It was ridiculously sentimental, but why shouldn't youth be sentimental? Perhaps it was because of this secret name she had for her lover and husband that the shock of his infidelity — as divulged by his mother and the perfidious captain — had well nigh crazed her. How could one's Golden Knight do so

foul a thing? The name she had called him in her thoughts came rushing back to her when she saw him on the screen, marching toward her so brave and straight, so gallant and true.

He was her Golden Knight! And now he was in the same house with her. She peered over the upstairs bannister and feasted her eyes on him as Blanche, with much grinning and bowing, ushered him in. Yes, it was her Percy. She had almost forgotten how tall he was — taller than Price Winston, who was at least a foot taller than his little fiancée. How yellow his hair was — still curling a bit in spite of the vigorous and impatient brushing he always gave it, scorning curls. She thought his face looked older and a bit sad; but it was difficult to tell from an upper hall, and in the fleeting glimpse she had before the young men entered the drawing room at Blanche's hospitable invitation:

"Yassir, yassir, all in an' waitin' fer you. Res' yo' hats an' step in the parlor an' take some cheers an' set down."

Price Winston laughed and Mary gave the first notes of a laugh, but clapped her hand over her mouth and jumped back. Her husband paused a moment before he followed his friend into the drawing room; paused and looked

vaguely down the hall, even casting his eyes up the stairs.

Mary could hear bits of the introduction that followed. She heard Peachey's:

"I hope Sir Percy remembers me as well as I do him and the pleasant occasion when we met."

"Ah, beastly bore I thought — no, no, not meeting you, but the theatricals at Dorset."

And Price Winston's:

"Ah, Miss Lizzie, I did not know you were to be here! This is a delightful and unexpected surprise."

And Miss Somer's booming answer:

"It is strange that the guest of honor should surprise one."

"Guest of honor — oh, er — I did not know you had come," stammered Price, after a warning pinch from Peachey.

Then Mary heard no more. The waitress must be in readiness to announce dinner. Her heart was beating very rapidly under the snowy bib of the apron. Could she go through with it? Ah, after all, it was only play acting. For the time being she was an Irish waitress with the toothache. To-morrow she would have out the offending snag as she had already done the front tooth, thereby leaving a disfiguring gap.

She must make this explanation of her appearance to Aunt Maria and Blanche.

It was a pity Lady Mary could not have heard the conversation between Price and Peachey. She would have been both amused and edified.

"Say, Peachey, how did the old hearse get in the parade?"

"Don't be so disrespectful. I was astonished at your lack of diplomacy a moment ago. You, an attaché at the Court of St. James! I thought nothing could throw you off your diplomatic balance. I have even boasted of it to — to a girl friend."

"But I must confess that your venerable cousin is a very severe test. It was rather upsetting to find her here when Virginia had said she would invite either Mrs. Johnston or Mrs. Tucker Byrd. And then for her to claim to be the guest of honor! That *was* disconcerting."

"To a diplomat, nothing should be disconcerting."

"I'm sorry! Try me again, honey."

"All right, maybe you will be put to the test very soon. Virginia's butler, Cy, is ill and the nursery governess is to serve dinner."

"But Henry tells me she is quite a lady — a real one."

"So she is — a real one — but sometimes real ladies do things that half way ladies won't do. I am dying to hear whether Sir Percy has told you anything."

"Yes, poor fellow, many things. He is awfully cut up. He doesn't know why his wife left him, but does not believe that she left with Huntington."

"That's rather fine of him."

"He says Huntington is a cad, but he trusts his wife implicitly."

"Men trust women more than women do men. I wonder why."

"It seems that Huntington got excused from the wedding ceremonies of the prince, presumably to go to a sister who was supposed to be dying. Darcy heard it by the merest accident, but when he returned to Ensley there was Huntington!"

"I knew it! I knew it! Just what I said!"

"I don't remember your saying anything about it."

"I mean —"

"You mean you are Miss Know-all, so I won't tell you any more."

"Oh, please! I don't know a thing and I am dying to know something."

"Darcy wants to find his wife. He hates the

idea of employing detectives, but feels that is the only way to find her. He thinks she is on the stage. She loved acting and was a born mimic. He is deeply concerned, because she must be out of funds. She had but recently recovered from a severe illness and sometimes he thinks maybe she has lost her reason and is wandering about the country half demented. She left a brief note, saying she was going to the Continent. But from something her maid let drop, Percy is convinced it is the American continent."

And then the hostess made a belated entrance and the *tete-a-tete* between the lovers must cease. Sir Percy was evidently relieved at her coming, as Miss Somer had been endeavoring to make him understand the intricacies of a union between Somer and Darcy that had taken place more than a century before. He was a fairly polite young man, but his patience had about reached the breaking point. He was perfectly willing to concede relationship to the old person with the booming voice, but he was far from willing to hear any more about it.

"Virginia, you will no doubt be interested to learn that Sir Percy is of the same stock as the first Somer who came to this country. Like most of the present generation, he is ignorant

of the ramifications of his family. But he has the nose and the name, which is proof enough for a genealogist."

Poor Percy felt his nose sadly. A very good nose it was, but he had a decided grudge against it for getting him into such difficulties. He almost wished it had been a pug — except that Mary had liked his nose. She had told him so repeatedly. Ah, me! Any nose would do to be miserable with. But that was a very good odor that caused those offending aristocratic nostrils to quiver involuntarily.

Aunt Maria was in the act of making a waffle to test batter and waffle iron, and in a twinkling the unmistakable and pleasing odor had begun to permeate the house. All doors might be closed as tightly as doors could be closed, but a baking waffle can not be downed.

Price Winston's nostrils quivered also. With a long drawn sigh of delight, he exclaimed:

"Waffles, Darcy! Mrs. Meade is giving us a typical Virginia supper this evening instead of the dinner that is usually served in the civilized world. I made an especial request for it for your sake."

"Awfully kind, I'm sure," said Sir Percy.

At Price's announcement Miss Somer snorted loudly:

"*You* made the request, indeed! I sent word to Virginia myself by that saucy English maid that I was coming to have supper with her — not dinner. You can thank me for whatever we are about to receive. Our forefathers dined at three and supped at seven and what was good enough for them is good enough for me and should be for all the rest of this present generation."

"Of vipers!" Price whispered to Peachey.

"Supper is all right," said Henry, "but I can not work on a heavy mid-day dinner."

"Our forefathers did not work," answered Miss Somer.

"They worked other people, though." Henry was hungry and his dictatorial old cousin was getting on his nerves. He was also irritated that his wife should have asked Miss Mary to wait on the table, insisting that it was at his instigation. Anyhow, it might prove rather interesting to see how the girl would rise to the occasion. Henry was aware of the fact that Virginia had become jealous of the English nurse, jealous because of his evident admiration for her. He had never noticed it until a few minutes ago. He wondered if it had suddenly sprung into existence or if it had been smouldering for days or weeks. He tried to

remember whether or not he had expressed any great admiration for the girl before this evening. Voiced or not, he had admired her from the beginning. Perhaps Virginia was not so dense as one gave her credit, or blame, for being. But Mr. Meade would not allow himself to dwell on his wife's stupidity even in his inmost secret thoughts. He had always endeavored to think of her stupidity as naivete. Stupid indeed! Devilish clever she was at times. This evening her cleverness was undeniable. She had surmounted all difficulties except Cousin Lizzie, and the evening was young yet. No doubt in time she could even down that redoubtable old lady.

"Thank goodness, dinner at last!" sighed the host as the substitute waitress appeared at the door and in a low, sweet voice announced:

"Madam is served!"

CHAPTER XXIV

Lady Mary was right. Her husband ignored the presence of the servant as she had said he would. With Mrs. Meade on his arm he passed close by the masquerading lady, close enough to have touched her had he stretched forth his hand. However, Mrs. Meade looked critically at the waitress, critically and haughtily. She noted that the toothache had progressed and also moved. She was sure the swelling had been on the left side earlier in the evening and now it was plainly on the right. One of the things that made Mrs. Henry Marshall Meade so devilishly clever was that she never forgot a detail such as on which side a swelling was. At least Henry and Peachey could not say the girl was beautiful. She looked positively homely with her face all lined and seamed. A front tooth out, too! She must have forgotten her plate. Very careless and disrespectful of her to leave it out when she should want to look her best in honor of the distinguished guest.

Price Winston also looked critically at the

English girl. His host had told him of the pretty nursery governess, and the fact that Mrs. Meade had pressed her into waiting on the table, and Peachey's assertion that she was very much a lady, had piqued his curiosity. His glance caught her off her guard. Darcy had his back to her. For the moment she forgot to be the Irish waitress with a toothache and was the young wife with a heartache. The disfiguring wad of cotton did not sufficiently disguise the Lady Mary Darcy from the astute gaze of the young American.

"Why didn't you put a fellow on?" he whispered to Peachey.

"A diplomat should always be on."

The business of eating soon engrossed the company. Mary was kept so busy she forgot she was playing a part and became a waitress in earnest. As fast as Aunt Maria could bake waffles Blanche hurried with them to the dining-room door, where Mary relieved her of her burden and passed them around the table, the diners in turn relieving her. Sir Percy ate enormously. His wife almost felt it her duty to remonstrate with him. Indeed, she did deliberately skip him once, but was reprimanded in a low tone by the mistress and must go back and serve him to his tenth — yes, his tenth.

She had counted. It was with relief that she heard Blanche's sibilant whisper as she handed in a heaped-up plate of the delectable dainties:

"The las' er the batter!"

The supper party had not been the brilliant success that Mrs. Meade had hoped it would be, except so far as the food was concerned. That was perfect and evidently appreciated by the guest of honor. He talked very little and seemed steeped in gloom. Occasionally he laughed and his laugh was boyish and happy, but each time he caught himself up as though he were at a funeral and laughter out of order.

Price Winston, usually full of good stories and clever repartee, was silent and nervous. He managed to dispose of many waffles and showed no mercy to the fried chicken. But he had the air of one sitting on the edge of the crater of an active volcano. He did not seem to be able to keep his eyes off the face of the waitress. His first shock at the distressing change in the appearance of the one time beautiful Lady Mary Darcy gave way to amusement as he realized the clever make-up of age and toothache. Price Winston had in years gone by been an active member in the Little Theatre League and had served a whole season on the Make-up Committee. The miss-

ing front tooth did not fool him and the lines of care, from nostril to corners of the mouth, only delighted the soul of the artist. In spite of his amusement, he was filled with dread that at any moment his friend Darcy might recognize his wife and a scene ensue.

Peachey made a valiant effort to hold up her end of the conversation, but so intense was her sympathy for Lady Mary that at times she found it difficult to keep from weeping. Then again the ludicrous side of the situation appealed to her so strongly that she caught herself laughing excitedly over remarks made by her Cousin Lizzie or her Brother Henry that were not intended at all to be humorous.

The ball of conversation was kept rolling principally by Miss Somer and Mr. Meade; the former determined to monopolize the conversation and the latter equally determined that she should not. He attempted to tell the story of the Bishop of Kentucky, who was inordinately fond of waffles. This was in connection with a remark Sir Percy had made in regard to the delectability of that food. It seems that on one of his parochial visits the Bishop ate so many waffles that the small black boy, whose business it was to run from outside kitchen to dining-room bearing hot waffles, was kept out

of breath by the voracity of the guest. Finally the little darkey said to the Bishop in a confiding whisper:

"Mr. Bishop, couldn't you eat jes' one mo'?"

"Why, yes, my boy, I could eat just one more."

"Well, Mr. Bishop, tain't no mo'."

The tale was told after Blanche had announced in her stage whisper that there was no more batter, and waffles were passed to Sir Percy immediately following the remark. Virginia was plainly shocked by her husband's story, which she considered cast reflections on both her honored guest and her own housekeeping.

"Why, Henry, I don't think Sir Percy has eaten so many waffles, and I am sure there are plenty more." Then Miss Elizabeth Somer spoke up:

"I have taken no interest in the Bishop of Kentucky since I heard that he is preaching to the Negroes. Not at all a seemly thing for an Episcopal Bishop to do. I wrote him a letter, which I felt at liberty to do since his first wife was a distant connection of my father, and I told him that I was not alone in thinking there were other religious sects that were plenty good enough for darkies."

"That is interesting," said Sir Percy. "Now

in England we encourage the peasantry to stick to the established Church."

"That is all very well where there is an established peasantry as there is in England — and used to be here before the war."

"But Cousin Elizabeth," laughed Peachey, "I fancy we shall all go to Heaven by the same road and on the same kind of ticket."

"Nonsense, Peachey! A Negro who goes to Heaven is undoubtedly a good Negro and will know his place there as well as on earth."

"I agree with you perfectly, Cousin Elizabeth," said Mrs. Meade, who felt that she had been too long out of the conversation. "Segregation of the races is the only way to solve the problem."

Then it was that Mary laughed. It was not a loud laugh and she managed to hold it in until she got out of the dining room. From the butler's pantry it came rippling forth. Sir Percy turned his head and listened as though he expected to catch another note of a bird song. Price Winston overturned his glass of water, flooding the table cloth and thereby irritating his hostess, who remarked acidly:

"Price, you seem very nervous."

"Smoking too much," he answered, searching wildly for some excuse.

"Then eschew tobacco, O, suave and finished diplomat," teased Peachey.

"Peachey!" exclaimed Miss Somer, "I am astonished at you — shocked, in fact, that you should advise any gentleman to chew tobacco. Smoking is all right. I am fond of a good cigar or even cigarettes in moderation — "

"Have one of mine," said Sir Percy, taking from his pocket a silver cigarette holder. "They are very mild, put up for ladies, in fact."

Miss Elizabeth was almost speechless with indignation.

"Is this an insult or an English joke?"

"Pardon me, madam, it is neither. What do American ladies smoke?"

"Ladies, whether they be American or English, do not smoke."

"I will have one of your cigarettes, Sir Percy," put in Peachey. "I have always intended to learn to smoke and I think I'll begin right now on one of yours."

"Good for you, little sister," whispered Henry, "you have saved the pieces." Miss Somer snorted and was for the moment silenced.

"What a beautiful cigarette case, Sir Percy," said Peachey.

"Yes, my most cherished possession. I never move without it," said Percy dreamily.

"Why, Sir Percy, I didn't know men carried vanity boxes!" exclaimed Mrs. Meade as she touched a tiny spring, thereby disclosing a mirror concealed in the back of the case.

"Ah, really, you know, the case doesn't exactly belong to me. It was my wife's." Virginia solemnly handed it back to him. "Sometimes," he continued dreamily, "I look in this little mirror and then I think how often her pretty image has smiled from it. I can almost see her — "

Mary stood behind Sir Percy, her countenance working with emotion. He held the mirror from him, totally oblivious of the fact that he was thinking aloud. For a flash the face of the waitress was reflected in the little mirror and then was gone. Thank God the supper was over and Mary need not appear again. She had reached the end of her tether of endurance.

Sir Percy came to himself and looked around the table. All the faces were pained, embarrassed, or curious.

"I beg your pardon — didn't mean to make a bally ass of myself." He put the cigarette case on the table and drained his coffee cup.

Henry came to the rescue with a proposition that he should take the dinner party out for a spin in his new car. The plan met with general

approval except from Miss Somer, who said she took no stock in the modern means of locomotion and would rather spend her time in the library reading the Southern Churchman. Henry insisted upon her accompanying them only so much as politeness demanded of him. It was a distinct relief to all of them that the unwelcome guest declined the invitation.

"Old wet blanket!" muttered Henry. "By the way, Price, I wish you would show Sir Percy those old silver tankards that my grandfather's slaves buried during the war to keep the Yankees from making away with them. I must get out the car. My chauffeur is off for the evening and Virginia and Peachey must powder their noses and put on their scarves."

And so it came about that Price Winston and Sir Percy Darcy were alone for a few minutes, Price going through the motions of showing the family heirlooms ranged on the sideboard. Mary, seated in the butler's pantry, could hear every word of their conversation.

"Winston, old fellow, I am sorry to have been such a duffer with your friends, but I can't shake off a feeling I have. I almost think I am going mad. I have the sensation that Mary was with me all evening. Most uncanny, I can assure you. Maybe it is an evil omen

and my girl is in trouble — or even dying or dead. She used to tell Irish tales of the dying being able to manifest themselves to their loved ones. Oh, Winston, do you believe I can ever find her?"

"Yes, I do, Darcy. I am as sure that you will find her and that she will be well, as I am that we are standing here."

"Twice this evening I thought I heard her laugh — you know Mary's laugh? It is different from any other laugh. Again and again the shape of her hands flashed before my eyes. I have been trying to recall the shape of her hands ever since she — she — but somehow they eluded me. Now I can remember them well. Once I thought I saw her sweet face in the little mirror — not quite her face — it was sad and strangely distorted — but the eyes were hers. It was only for a second, and of course I know it was nothing but my imagination."

"Well, buck up, old boy! I have a pricking in my thumbs that you will have your wife back with you before so very long," declared Price, wishing that he could take matters in his own hands and tell this sentimental young man that his wife had been handing him waffles all evening and watching him eat them, and on her face there had been an expression that sug-

gested satirical amusement. But perhaps the time was not ripe for such disclosures. He had promised Peachey and must stick to his word. He could merely reiterate that Lady Mary was in the land of the living and no doubt would soon be in the arms of her Percy.

"You are a great comfort, Winston. I could not have talked to an Englishman as I have to you. We Anglo-Saxons are timid when it comes to expressing sentiment to one another."

"But I am Anglo-Saxon."

"Of course, but you have been fed differently for generations. Perhaps a century or so of fried chicken and waffles has made you more sympathetic. Roast beef and Yorkshire pudding do not make for sentiment."

"That's so! A worm is but tobacco in another form," laughed Price.

"Another thing — if I don't bore you," continued Sir Percy, sadly, "I am very sensitive to odours, and again and again this evening I have been conscious of that delicate, indefinable perfume that clings always to my Mary. Not a scent — I don't believe she uses a perfume — but the faint sweetness of the eglantine or evening primrose when first it opens."

"Er — er — could it have been the cigarette?"

"No, man, no! I can tell the difference between my wife and tobacco. It makes me think of that song Mary used to sing about 'I sent thee late a rosy wreath.' You remember how it goes: 'But thou thereon didst only breathe and sendst it back to me — Since when it blooms and smells, I swear, not of itself but thee'."

CHAPTER XXV

A toot from Henry's horn warned them that the new car was champing to show its speed. Virginia captured the nobleman and was off with him, much to the relief of Price Winston, who was longing for one moment alone with his sweetheart. Peachey, however, was still engrossed in the affairs of Lady Mary.

"Go in the hall, Price, there's a dear, and lose your hat or gloves or something — just to keep Henry quiet. I simply must see Lady Mary a moment."

"I'll do it if you — "

"All right! I will."

"Oh, Peachey, what an Alberta you are! That's the first kiss I have had from you for days, what with that wretched boarding-house parlor and Monroe Parks and — "

"As Aunt Maria sings: 'No hiding place down here'," laughed Peachey, giving him another for good measure. "Now run and lose your hat, little boy." Then she called Lady Mary, who was in the butler's pantry, well

knowing her little friend would not go out without speaking to her. She had managed to remove the make-up, as well as the disfiguring toothache, and her face was rosy and her eyes sparkling.

"My dear, my dear," cried Peachey, embracing her. "Please, please, let Price tell Sir Percy. I never saw so wretched a man. He is dying of love for you."

"He took a great deal of nourishment for a dying man. My arm aches with the serving of waffles."

"You surely would not begrudge him that comfort. Anyhow, you won the bet. Sir Percy lived up to what you said better than Price did to what I hoped of him. But be quick. Will you let Price tell your husband?"

The horn gave a prolonged tooting that would not be ignored in spite of Price's reiteration that he could not find his hat.

"Go now, dear little American, I'll let you know when you return from your drive."

Price entered the dining room. At the sight of Lady Mary, restored to her natural beauty, he gasped. Then he took the girl's hands in both of his and leaning over he kissed them reverently.

"Lady Mary, I am yours to command."

But the impatient toot of Henry's horn could no longer be endured.

Mary stood for a moment after they were gone, looking at the place where her husband had sat. A restlessness possessed her. Thank goodness the dinner was over! Anyhow she had not spilled the imaginary soup. The table must be cleared. What! Sir Percy had forgotten his cigarette case. There it was at his place. She picked it up and clasped it to her bosom. She opened the vanity side and gazed at herself in the mirror.

"Oh, Mary, Mary, have done with masquerading!" She drew forth a cigarette and lit it at one of the candles, and sinking in the chair so lately occupied by her husband she closed her eyes luxuriously.

"Lawd love us, Miss Mary, I ain't never seed a white 'ooman smoke befo'. I seed 'em dip snuff, though. Does you lak the tas' er smokin'?" asked Blanche.

"Yes, have one."

"No'm, no'm! I got habits ernough. Aunt Maria done sent me ter say if you set right down ter the table she got a scrumptious batch er waffles helt back fer you."

"How charming of her! Will you serve me?"

"Sho I will. Miss 'Ginia thinks I ain't got style ernough, but I is. I kin walk with as el'gant a air as the nixt." Suiting the action to the word, Blanche brought in a laden tray, held high after the manner of the waiters on the steamboat.

"Thank you, Blanche. All of you are very kind to me."

"Lawsamussy, Miss Mary, don't you know us all knows you is quality. Niggers is reg'lar bloodhoun's. They knows blue bloods from po' whites jes' by the smell of 'em. Uncle Cy an' Aunt Maria spotted you the minute they sot eyes on you. Now you eat yo' fill, Miss Mary, an' I'll go out an' see if Aunt Maria ain't got a few necks an' backs fer me."

Mary looked at the pile of waffles in front of her, sighed, shook her head and pushed them away. Suddenly she remembered Mike and his little charge. Almost simultaneous with her thought of them they appeared in the doorway, the baby asleep and comfortably held in the crook of the boy's arm. Mary jumped up from the table.

"Michael, Michael! How could I have forgotten you and the baby? And didn't Mrs. Meade see that you were released. But of course she didn't."

"Not her! She's too busy looking after number one! But don't you worry, Miss Mary."

"I'm so ashamed — but Michael I have had a strenuous day and am so upset. I can think of nothing but my own affairs."

"Sure and you have had enough affairs of your own to keep you busy. I would have looked after the little shaver until doomsday if I hadn't been famished for some grub. Sitting up there in the nursery all by myself while the kid slept, I got to thinking about my Mither, God rest her soul, and Miss Di Rowney that married a nobleman — and her poor little lamb alone here in America out at service — and then the happenings of the day and what we saw at the movies — and what you told me afterwards about the old Do-wagger — and then the mistress raising the divil about my being five minutes late when she thinks nothing of keeping me out in all weather for hours."

"You poor Michael! Sit right down here and eat these waffles all buttered and hot."

"Oh, Miss Mary!"

"Do as I tell you. Here, give me the baby."

Mike did not need much persuading, but sat down and fell to with a relish. Between mouthfuls he continued:

"It was all I could do to keep from telling

her that I couldn't help being late as I had to look after a real lady. And then to be called in and told that my little Miss Mary, Lady Mary, was going to wait on the table where her own husband was the honored guest. Gee! The pity of it was enough to make a man hungry."

Mary laughed.

"Tell me, Michael, does grief always make a man hungry?"

"It hits 'em different ways, Miss, but it always finds me empty. When I'm in trouble I mostly overeats."

"Sir Percy ate so much this evening I could hardly believe he was missing me at all, Michael."

"Aw, that doesn't mean anything. It looks like sometimes a fellow tries to fill up with food the place where his heart used to be."

"And now I am going to light one of my own especial brand of cigarettes for you, Michael, so you can top off a very good supper."

"Yes, a mighty good one, and I reckon the little 'steps' at home will be wondering where I am and saving me supper until it is dried up to a crisp."

Mike leaned back and blew beautiful blue rings of smoke as he looked at the lovely lady

and thought of the old days in Donegal when that same lovely lady was a tiny girl and they sat together on the low bench and watched the smoke from the peat fire curling up the chimney. Mary smiled at Mike and thought of her Golden Knight, marching in the London street and coming closer and closer to her.

The reverie of the two was rudely broken into by the rumbling voice of Miss Somers as she stalked into the dining room, Southern Churchman in her hand and battle in her eye.

"Well! Then this is the modern custom! The nurse maid entertains the chauffeur in the dining room while the master and mistress are out; and the baby, instead of being left in the cradle, is lugged downstairs. Smoking, too! Sir Percy Darcy's cigarettes — ah, and the case of his dead wife!"

"I did not understand she was dead," said Mary, holding the silver case tightly.

"Do not presume to talk back to me. The emotion with which he spoke of her plainly indicated that she was dead. Give me that silver case, young woman, and I will return it to its lawful owner."

"I am its lawful owner," said the girl simply.

"You?"

"Yes, I!"

"And how did you become so?" indignantly.

"Sir Percy Darcy gave it to me."

"Nonsense! When, may I ask?"

"Perhaps he meant it for a tip. He left it by his plate, and silver left by a guest's plate is always looked upon by the servants as a tip."

"Absurd! I have always heard that English servants expect a tip at every turn, but did not think it possible that a handsome piece of silver, accidentally left on the supper table by a guest, would be construed as a tip, even by the most brazen of maids. Give me that cigarette case." Miss Somer had taken on a tone both aggressive and commanding. She attempted to take the cigarette case by force, but Mary jumped from her seat and quickly put the table between them.

"You refuse — then I shall speak to Mrs. Meade of your impertinence."

"That is as you chose, madam, I am leaving Mrs. Meade's service at any rate."

"Leaving! When?"

"To-night, perhaps." She took off her cap and asked Mike to untie the apron so that she would not have to awaken the baby, who slept peacefully and happily in her arms.

Miss Somer went quickly from the room and Mary and Mike were guilty of giggling when

they heard her call up police headquarters on the telephone, demanding a policeman immediately. She stated that she was at the home of her cousin, Mr. Henry Marshall Meade, and since Mr. and Mrs. Meade were both away from home she felt it to be her duty to inform the authorities that the nurse had committed a theft of the most flagrant kind and she was informed that the girl intended to leave the service of Mrs. Meade immediately. She hung up the receiver with a satisfied click and returned to the dining room.

"Now we shall see to whom this cigarette case belongs. I feel it to be my duty to protect the interests of my second cousin in his absence. Give me the baby. I do not consider you a proper person to have the care of my second cousin, once removed."

Mike sprang from his chair with a: "See here! You—" but Mary's "Never mind, Michael," quieted him. Mary gave the sleeping infant to the indignant old lady, who held him gingerly from her.

"Perhaps you would feel more comfortable if you had on an apron," suggested Mary. "Allow me!" Miss Somer submitted stiffly and Mary tied the ruffled waitress apron around her waist. She then seated herself to await

developments. Mary's discarded cap, a tiny bit of lace trimmed organdy, had dropped to the floor. Mike picked it up and lightly placed it on Miss Somer's head. That lady, already supporting much false hair on the crown, did not feel the added weight of the bit of organdy.

The front door opened to admit the returned automobilists. The voice of Sir Percy Darcy was heard explaining that he had left something in the dining room and must get it. As he entered by one door Mary made her exit into the butler's pantry, drawing Mike with her. Seeing Miss Somer in cap and apron and holding a baby, the young Englishman made a fatal error.

"Ah, nurse, I left my cigarette case here on the table. Have you by chance seen it?"

"Nurse, indeed! It seems strange that in half an hour you should completely forget the lady by whom you sat at supper."

"Ah, beg pardon! Stupid of me I am sure, but the garb and occupation. Please, have you seen my cigarette case?"

"A mere apron and baby could not transform me into the semblance of a nurse."

Mr. and Mrs. Meade, following their guest into the dining room, were struck dumb with amazement to see their elderly relative in cap

and apron, gingerly holding Henry Marshall Meade IV in her bony arms.

"By Jove, Cousin Elizabeth, how *chic* you are! I never saw you look handsomer," exclaimed Mr. Meade.

"Nonsense! Henry Meade, there are serious matters that should occupy your attention," said Miss Somer sternly.

"But what is my baby doing down stairs this time of night?" cried Mrs. Meade, who was sure Miss Somer had gone quite mad.

"That is for your menials to divulge, unless they have already escaped before the officers of the law come and do their duty. I came into the dining room for a glass of water and you can imagine my astonishment and disgust to find your chauffeur seated at the table eating waffles, although I distinctly heard it announced at supper that there was no more batter. Yes, eating waffles! And your precious English nursery governess was seated by him, holding the baby in her arms and smoking one of Sir Percy's cigarettes."

"Miss Mary? There, Henry, what did I tell you," said Virginia.

"Lots of things!" muttered Henry, who was puzzled but not at all excited. As for Sir Percy, he stood and looked on, very much at a

loss as to what it all meant, but determined to stick it out until his cigarette case was restored to him.

"And when I accused the wench of theft," boomed Miss Elizabeth, "seeing that she had taken possession of the handsome silver cigarette case, she brazenly announced that it was her property, claiming that Sir Percy had given it to her."

"How's that?" from Percy.

"Yes, she said you had given it her. She hesitated long enough to make up a lie; said that you had left it at your place as a tip — the cigarette case of your dead wife."

"My dead wife! Oh, dear lady, what do you know of my wife? What makes you say she is dead?" The young man was as white as the table cloth. "Tell me what do you know of her?"

"Nothing!" said Miss Somer, shortly. "You gave the impression she was dead."

"Do something, Henry Meade! Say something!" urged Virginia. Henry tried to quiet his aged cousin, who was still holding the baby, and at the same time endeavored to explain to Sir Percy.

"I can't quite make it out, Sir Percy, but I am sure there is a mistake somewhere. This

Miss Mary, who is nursing our son, waited on the table this evening — "

"Mary!"

"Yes, Miss Mary! A deuced pretty girl except for a toothache that had somewhat marred her beauty for the time being. Perhaps you noticed her."

"Now, Henry," broke in Virginia, "you must know that English people, I mean the better classes, never notice servants."

"Don't they?" broke in Percy. "I never thought of that, but I did not notice the waitress. Mary, you say her name is?"

The door bell rang sharply, and Blanche, breathless and excited, ushered in a dapper policeman who came directly to the point.

"Mr. Meade, I came on a call from your house — nurse maid accused of stealing a valuable article belonging to a guest. Is this the nurse?" he asked, approaching Miss Somer, who trembled so violently with rage that the baby was in danger of being dropped.

"The sixth insult I have received this evening," she rumbled, haughtily.

Mary, whose maternal instinct seemed to be developed more highly than the baby's own mother, could bear it no longer and rushed in the room.

"Give me the baby before you spill him," she said, and took the sleeping infant from the now unresisting arms of Miss Somer.

"There stands the culprit! The stolen goods on her! See, tucked in her belt is the missing silver case! Officer, do your duty." Miss Elizabeth pointed her finger at Mary.

"But this cigarette case is mine. Isn't it Percy?"

"Percy!" cried Mrs. Meade in a scandalized tone. As for Mr. Meade, he just sank in a chair and laughed and laughed so heartily that Blanche, who had never left the room since she had ushered in the policeman and who was ever ready for hilarity from any cause, whether she knew what the joke was or not, laughed too; and Aunt Maria peeped curiously through the half open door.

From the moment Mary entered the room Sir Percy had stood like one in a trance. Now, at Mary's direct question, and at the sound of his name, he sprang forward and, taking Mary, baby and all in his arms, sobbed out:

"Oh, Mary, Mary, my Mary!"

CHAPTER XXVI

An Englishman is no more inclined to embrace his wife in public than he is to allow himself to show emotion to another Englishman, but perhaps the waffles and fried chicken had somewhat softened Sir Percy's adamantine Anglo-Saxon reserve, at least he kept on hugging Mary, regardless of the fact that he was surrounded by a room full of curious persons.

Mr. Meade stopped laughing and gave the policeman a cigar, informing him there would be no arrests for the time being and that he might as well leave.

"Not even the old one in the cap?" questioned the officer regretfully, and then Miss Elizabeth Somer clapped her hand to the top of her head and pulled off the organdy abomination.

"I must have put it there without thinking," she actually faltered. So great was the poor lady's *amour propre* that she could not for an instant harbor the thought that anyone had been so bold as to violate her sacred person to the

extent of placing the badge of a menial on her august head.

Price and Peachey, who had been watching the development of the drama from the hall door, were smiling happily.

"Things are breaking their way," whispered Price.

"Isn't it glorious?" from Peachey.

Mrs. Meade puckered her pretty brow again and stood a moment irresolute, then she hurried to the telephone and once more called up the society editress of the morning paper.

"Yes, Miss Davis, this is Mrs. Henry Marshall Meade the Third. You remember I promised to call you later on this evening. I want to tell you, Miss Davis, that there is not a word of truth in the report in that foreign letter that Sir Percy Darcy and his wife, the Lady Mary, are separated. In fact, they are here in my home, our house guests. Yes, both of them were here to dinner. It was only a foolish mistake. Yes, indeed, Miss Davis, I am sure any publicity setting them right in the eyes of the world would be acceptable to them. Yes. Yes, indeed, she is very charming — much admired and very beautiful. A devoted couple! I can't see how such a foolish report ever got out. Not at all, Miss Davis, indeed you are

very welcome. Yes, no doubt the Associated Press would be glad to get hold of this authentic news."

Virginia's voice was clear at all times and her telephone voice was far reaching, her enunciation distinct, every word unmistakable. The above conversation could be heard by anyone not too engrossed to listen.

"Isn't that just like her?" Peachey whispered to Price.

"Exactly! That's what I like about my sister-in-law to be. She is always true to form; always behaves like herself. She is actually putting a social feather in her cap. Do you think it is time for us to step up and make Percy break away? I think this hugging has gone on long enough."

The baby thought so too. He awoke and whimpered. Mrs. Meade also awoke to her responsibilities as a mother. She offered to take the baby, but Lady Mary clung to him.

"I hate to give him up. He has been all the world to me."

"Well, the world is pretty small after all," said Sir Percy. "Only fancy my finding you here in Richmond!"

Then ensued much handshaking and many explanations which Mary felt due her former

employers. Mrs. Meade was graciousness itself.

"I knew it all the time," she declared repeatedly. "Haven't I said over and over to you, Henry, that Miss Mary — I mean Lady Mary — was only masquerading as a nursery governess." She also pressed the young couple to remain as her "house guests," but the invitation was declined and soon Percy and Mary took themselves off for a down town hotel.

Miss Somer said but little, and that little grimly. She was not a whit embarrassed that she had accused an English lady of being a thief. If ladies expected to be recognized as such they should behave as such. English aristocracy was no better than Virginia aristocracy — not so good in fact — for, according to her way of thinking, the F. F. V's. had a much cleaner line of descent than the nobility of England. For her part she felt it a blessing that Henry Marshall Meade IV was no longer to be at the mercy of this pert girl.

"Now that you are to make a change in nurses, Virginia, I know of an excellent negro mammy who can do up the baby's cap strings, in fact all of his washing, as well as nurse. I saw Sukey in the park to-day and promised to look out for a good home for her. She is an

excellent old-time nurse without any new-fangled foolishness about her. Shall I engage her for you?"

Virginia was pleased to be gracious to even Miss Somer, thanked her warmly for her interest and commissioned her to procure Aunt Sukey at the earliest hour possible.

"In the meantime I am going to stay, if you will have me, Virginia, and help you take care of the baby until you get Aunt Sukey," whispered Peachey.

"Your room is always ready for you," answered Virginia. "In fact, if I had not thought that you might soon visit us I should have insisted upon Sir Percy and Lady Mary staying here. Of course, I asked them, but I felt all the time that if I could have been free to turn over to them the whole suite on the third floor I might have made my invitation more pressing and not so evidently perfunctory."

Mrs. Meade spent a restless night. She had a question to decide which was more important than mere sleep. Should she or should she not tell the younger married set all about the affair with the nursery governess? Of course she had every intention of letting them know that she had entertained, quite informally, Sir Percy and Lady Mary, but would it add any to her

social prestige to have had Lady Mary Darcy nursing the baby and eating in the butler's pantry?

Another thing that worried her was the matter of Miss Mary's wages. Should she offer to the wife of Sir Percy Darcy the two weeks' wages which were then due? Of course, strictly speaking, the nursery governess should not have quit without two weeks' notice to her employers. Now if the couple had accepted the offer of her hospitality, of course it would have been out of taste to pay Lady Mary's back wages, but since they had gone to the Jefferson Hotel, where they would no doubt stay for several days, was it not right that the wages should be paid? Mrs. Meade vaguely wondered if the book on etiquette, so largely advertised, would settle so delicate a question as the one keeping her from the sleep so much needed after the hectic day just passed. She longed to awaken her husband, who was soundly sleeping by her side and seemingly not the least uplifted or downcast over having had an English nobleman to dinner while an English noblewoman waited on the table. Henry would know what to do. She was sure of it, but she was also sure he would have that dreaded twinkle in his eye. She finally decided to call Price Winston in consul-

tation. Was he not a diplomat and trained to settle delicate matters between nations? Before the poor lady conquered her insomnia the question of Lady Mary's wages had assumed international importance. However, when she finally decided to leave it to the young attaché she sank into a reposeful slumber.

How foolish it was to have worried about it! The next morning when Lady Mary Darcy went to the Meade home on Monument Avenue to pack her trunk, she herself broached the subject of the wages due her, quite simply and without the least embarrassment.

"She took the money — actually took it," Virginia exploded to the intimate friend who was finally taken into her confidence. "I don't see how she could have if she is the great lady and society leader Peachey would have me believe her to be. Yes, she took it and folded the bills up into the neatest little squares and put them in her purse. And I felt like a fool because I hadn't liked to offer her the wages for fear of hurting her feelings."

"But hadn't she earned it?" asked the intimate.

"Yes, but I call it obtaining money under false pretences. She knew perfectly well I never would have hired her if I had known she

was a real lady. I thought she was just lady-like."

Blanche helped Lady Mary pack her belongings and reaped a wonderful harvest of waists and skirts and cast-off clothes of all descriptions.

"Aunt Maria an' Uncle Cy an' me air sho sorry you is a quittin', but I'm pow'ful glad ter be comin' inter these here raiments. Yessum. they's kinder near on me but I kin make out ter hold in an' not bust the belts. Aunt Maria air sorry now she done let herself go 'til she's too stoutish ter wear white folks' clothes."

The reunited couple remained in Richmond several days. Percy wished to look more closely into some investments he had been contemplating, and Mary felt she could not leave the pleasant southern city until she squared herself with her first and best friend in the States, Miss Effie Sharp Burton.

Squaring herself with Miss Effie was an easy matter.

"Bless you, my dear, I knew all the time you were married and, what's more, I had a hunch his name was Percy. How did I know? Don't you remember how you put your head on my shoulder and went to sleep on that day coach? Well, once when the train gave a jolt

I put my arm around you to steady you and you snuggled up confiding like and softly murmured: 'Percy.' That's how I knew what his name was. Then I knew you were married because when the Traveler's Aid lady asked you if you were single you hesitated and I had to butt in and say you were. I knew, but I trusted you and wasn't going to ask any questions. When you got ready to tell me I was all ears, but until then your business was your business and not mine. What I was afraid of was that Percy was going to prove to be a mucker and I'm mighty glad to see what a good fellow he is. Fact is, I like him — I like him a whole lot and I'm thinking he is worthy of you and that is speaking a mouthful, little lady. Yes, I'm going to come over to England to visit you, coming the first chance I get if I have to go steerage over and stowaway coming back. I've got other friends on the other side I'll have to look up. I'm mighty sorry I can't say I used to play with Lady Astor when we were kids, but I can say that if I had known her that we would have played together because she's just my kind — not particular about who she 'sociates with just so they don't put on airs."

Needless to say that at this Mary laughed.

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